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and Azalea
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PREFACE

This book considers how exotic iconographic and stylistic elements from Sasanian, Islamic, and Chinese sources were incorporated into middle Byzantine (ca. 843–1204) art and architecture in order to project a cosmopolitan concept of imperial authority. It focuses on objects and monuments produced for and by the imperial and court elite at the Byzantine capital, Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul), and explores the meanings that this select circle of viewers, users, patrons, and designers ascribed to artistic adoptions from other cultures. In so doing it revisits the long-standing question of the nature and meaning of imperial imagery, an issue that has been a central and perennial concern in the study of Byzantium.[1]

The "official" depiction of the emperor is usually understood to operate within a conservative and hermetic system dominated by an essentially Christian iconography that promoted divine endorsement of the ruler's universal dominion. Through reconsideration of objects and monuments that depart from this standard visual vocabulary, I argue that imperial imagery could also be open and responsive, and that its innovative features carried ideological significances that contributed in important and unique ways to the construction and promotion of middle Byzantine imperial power. The present study is concerned not with the individual portraits of specific emperors, but with the visual representation of the imperial concept.[2] I take a broad view of the media that contributed to the representation of the ruler, which I understand to have been constructed not only through works of art and architecture but through ceremonial performances and textual accounts as well. The "image" of the emperor that unfolds over the course of this book is one depicted in the verbal record as much as the visual, demanding that we think of texts and images as integrated agents of imperial power.

The works of art that form the focus of this study include portable objects, such as textiles, ivory boxes, enamel containers, and metal vessels, as well as architecture, particularly buildings at the imperial palace, which today are preserved only in the textual record. In these objects and monuments, visual reference to foreign art is selective, often constituting a single element in an assemblage of diverse iconographic or stylistic features. I argue that this recontextualization of non-Byzantine visual languages in a variety of media

bespeaks a meaningful and sustained dialogue between Byzantine and non-Byzantine art, and between Byzantine and non-Byzantine identities. This book offers a novel contribution to the evolving definition of what it meant to "be Byzantine," expanding beyond the trajectories of Greco-Roman and Christian culture that are usually privileged in such discussions.[3]

Many of the objects and monuments considered here are well-known works of middle Byzantine luxury art, and all of them evince complex programs executed with the highest artistic caliber. Yet the significance of their exotic features – and in some instances, the works of art themselves – are often neglected or marginalized in discussions about the nature and meaning of imperial art. Their reconsideration here provides insight into the limitations of existing interpretive strategies and the benefits to be gained from a fuller consideration of how exotic elements operate within middle Byzantine visual culture. Foreign adoptions were not limited to obscure objects and monuments or to the periphery of middle Byzantine artistic production. Rather, exoticizing works of art were manufactured and used at the epicenter of Byzantine culture, the imperial court. Although their visual content diverges from normative Byzantine ruler iconography, their programs employ strategies of visual communication that are found in other works of middle Byzantine art and literature. By analyzing foreign features in relation to traditional motifs and themes, this study integrates exoticizing objects and monuments into the mainstream of middle Byzantine art. At the same time, through consideration of the cross-cultural dimension of imperial imagery, it expands appreciation for the cosmopolitan nature of the court at Constantinople and enriches our conception of elite culture and identity in Byzantium. By crossing disciplinary boundaries that typically divide the study of Byzantine art from that of other cultural traditions, this book responds to the current call for an expanded approach to the exploration of medieval art. At the same time, by grounding inquiry in the Byzantine dimension of these interactions, cultural and historical specificity is maintained in the analysis of cross-cultural phenomena.

The period under consideration spans the mid-ninth to the early thirteenth centuries and is typically referred to as the middle Byzantine era (ca. 843–1204). It was a time of great change in Byzantium, particularly as regards its relations with foreign cultures. In the ninth century, Byzantium was largely on the defensive against encroaching powers, especially along its eastern frontiers, where Islamic armies made rapid and extensive claims on Byzantine territories beginning in the mid-seventh century, shortly after the advent of Islam.[4] Confrontations with Islamic forces, including those of the earliest dynasties, the Syrian Umayyads (661–750) and the Abbasids (750–1258), largely continued the adversarial relationship that Byzantium had maintained with the late antique Persian dynasty, the Sasanians (226–651), whom the early Islamic armies conquered and assimilated.[5] Particularly during the reign of the last Iconoclast

emperor, Theophilos (r. 829–42), Byzantium established more secure footing against the Abbasid Empire, marking a turn in the tide of the Byzantine-Islamic balance of power. By the tenth century, optimism for Byzantine fortunes was on the rise. Particularly with the successes of the military emperors of the late tenth century – including Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963–69) and John I Tzimiskes (r. 969–76) – Byzantium enjoyed increased security on multiple fronts and was able to regain and solidify territories along its eastern edges. In addition, trade relations between the Byzantine and Islamic worlds grew significantly in the tenth century, and merchants and diplomats traveled regularly between the capitals and courts of Mediterranean and Near Eastern polities. Commercial and political networks served as conduits for the circulation of works of art, artists, and consumers across a vast geographic and cultural sphere from Byzantium to China.

By the mid-eleventh century, however, Byzantine political and economic stability began to erode. Especially with the rise of the Seljuq dynasties of Anatolia (the Great Seljuqs [ca. 1040–1194] and the Seljuqs of Rum [ca. 1081–1307]), Byzantium was again under threat and suffered significant truncation of its eastern territories, a process marked by the loss of Mantzikert in 1071 and by the Byzantine defeat at Myriokephalon in 1176. Despite periodic improvements in Byzantium's position, overall the twelfth century saw mounting anxiety over the empire's diminished stature and the very real threat of territorial loss and political irrelevance. This trend reached catastrophic proportions with the Sack of Constantinople by Western European Crusaders in 1204, after which the remaining power structure of the Byzantine elite was dispersed to exile courts at Epiros, Nicaea, and Trebizond until the reestablishment of Byzantine control of Constantinople in 1261.

Given the long-standing contacts between Byzantium and Sasanian-Islamic political powers, it is perhaps surprising that evidence for the impact of these foreign cultures on Byzantium is not more extensively or overtly attested in the textual and material records. Indeed, the objects and monuments immediately relevant to this study are few in number, and each is unique in terms of its iconographic program, representing individual responses to particular moments in Byzantium's relations with foreign cultures.[6] Because of the diversity among these works of art and architecture, it is impossible to contend that there exists a unified "corpus" of exoticizing works of middle Byzantine art. Still, as Paul Magdalino observes regarding the study of Byzantine-Islamic scholarly interaction,

> one cannot judge the impact of foreign culture on Byzantine intellectual life simply by a literal reading of explicit comments in Byzantine sources. One has to recognize that rejection, whether expressed through adverse comment or through silence, may be a rhetorical attitude, which does not preclude reception and may actually be used to disguise it. The important thing is to look carefully for evidence of contacts.[7]

Although the adoption of exotic iconographic and stylistic features in middle Byzantine art is limited in scale, individual objects and monuments display complex and meaningful programs that make firm statements about the importance of these interactions. Their small number belies what must have been the deep and pervasive impact of foreign cultures on Byzantine consciousness, particularly as concerns the conception and visual articulation of imperial power.

While this book by necessity considers Sasanian, Islamic, Chinese, and Byzantine evidence, it focuses on the Byzantine perspective of these cultural contacts and in this sense is less concerned with the mechanics of cross-cultural processes, focusing instead on how exotic elements were negotiated within Byzantine art. Byzantine adoption of foreign artistic motifs and styles is a topic that has received relatively minimal and isolated scholarly attention. When addressed as a large-scale phenomenon, it tends to be treated in generic terms, with different objects and monuments proposed to operate according to a single dynamic of aesthetic imitation that lacked deeper meaning or purpose.[8] In more focused studies, the subtleties and significance of artistic interactions often come to the fore, but the larger picture of intercultural relations can be lost.

The present study attempts to address these shortcomings by combining multiple analyses of individual works of art and architecture with a diachronic perspective that reveals the diverse motivations behind Byzantine adoptions of foreign artistic elements. This perspective is articulated through chapter titles – emulation, appropriation, parity, expropriation, and incomparability – that characterize distinct dynamics at play in the artistic interface between Byzantium and the foreign cultures with which it engaged. Each chapter focuses on select objects and monuments, foregrounding close readings of the visual and textual evidence in order to yield interpretations firmly rooted in the works of art themselves. Objects and monuments are analyzed in relation to their historical contexts so that cross-cultural artistic interaction can be situated within broader trends of Byzantine sociohistorical and ideological transformation. This approach also brings to light the diversity of messages embedded in programs that incorporate exotic features.

In order to underscore distinctions among these various dynamics of cross-cultural interaction, special attention is given to defining a set of key terms employed throughout this study. They draw to some extent from earlier literature on the topics of Byzantine imperial imagery and medieval cross-cultural interaction, but also introduce new concepts and frameworks that merit further explanation. In structuring my discussion according to a standard vocabulary, I do not intend to diminish the complex phenomena discussed here to reductive formulae. Rather, engaging with a set of fixed terms is intended to clarify connections among the disparate and multifaceted objects and historical moments examined in this study.

In distinguishing among different types of imperial imagery, I introduce two domains for its production and circulation: the official and the unofficial.[9] The "official" represents the traditional ideology of divine endorsement that remained largely unchanged over time. In the visual record, it is best attested in the iconography of coins and seals produced under the auspices of the emperor and disseminated throughout the empire and beyond. It was also found in a diversity of other media including ivories, manuscripts, textiles, wall painting, mosaic, and sculpture, which saturated Byzantine visual culture at both the elite and popular levels. In contrast to these highly regulated and conservative depictions of the emperor, I propose that there also circulated "unofficial" images, which departed from the standard iconography and were intended for consumption by a more limited audience of court elites. It is in this unofficial domain that innovative images of imperial power were conceived and promoted. Such representations allowed the emperor and his court to respond to the shifting political realities of the medieval world stage and Byzantium's position within it. Unofficial imagery could be constructed by nonimperial individuals, in particular the courtiers who had privileged access to the ruler and who would have been well informed about contemporary political, military, and economic developments. As a result, imperial imagery could become a site for presenting varied and even contested notions of imperial power, which sometimes critiqued the emperor instead of – or in tandem with – celebrating him.

Throughout this study, the words "element" and "feature" refer to any discrete physical or visual aspect of a work of art. The two primary types of elements I discuss are stylistic and iconographic, and I follow conventional art historical definitions for both. "Style" refers to the physical attributes that characterize the form of a work of art and that can be used to coordinate the work of art with other objects or monuments showing similar features.[10] "Iconography" refers to a motif as a semantic entity that expresses meaning through symbolic associations, which are further dependent on the sociocultural matrices within which the element was created and viewed. I do not, however, deny the potential for style to convey meaning. Indeed, the use of a foreign style as an iconographic feature emerges as a primary strategy in the programs of some objects considered here.

In addressing the individuals responsible for the production and reception of works of art and architecture, I generally exclude the category of "artists" or "craftsmen" from the equation, focusing instead on "patrons," "designers," "viewers," and "users." In the Byzantine world, there is little evidence to suggest that those responsible for the physical crafting of objects (i.e., artists or craftsmen) made significant contributions to devising the complex iconographic programs found in the works of art considered here. That task likely fell instead to designers and patrons, who may or may not have been the same

individual(s).[11] The craftsman's hand is certainly relevant to questions of technical or stylistic attributes of medieval works of art, but these topics are not the primary focus of the present study. In terms of reception, I recognize the role of the intended audience to entail not only viewing objects and monuments but also using them. This point draws to the fore the special nature of medieval works of art and architecture, whose functional aspects were rarely, if ever, entirely separable from their aesthetic qualities.

The term "Byzantium" is a modern invention, coined in the sixteenth century by scholars who wished to distinguish the eastern Christian Roman Empire from the earlier western Roman Empire of the pre-Christian era.[12] As is well known, the Byzantines referred to themselves as "Romans" and in some instances "Hellenes," viewing their own society as an unbroken continuation of the Roman Empire and – at certain points in time – drawing a connection between their Christian-Greek culture and the pagan-Greek world of antiquity.[13] Nonetheless, I follow current convention, using the term "Byzantine" to refer to the culture that embodied a political continuation of the Roman Empire following the transfer of the capital from Rome to Constantinople in 324, but a religious break from Roman paganism following the legalization and later official adoption of Christianity over the course of the fourth century. At the same time, I recognize that the transition from "Roman" to "Byzantine" was gradual, with many cultural practices and identities extending across the centuries. For this reason, I employ the term "Roman-Byzantine" when discussing phenomena of the late antique period that were common to pagan (Roman) and Christian (Byzantine) phases. I follow the convention of taking the period of Iconoclasm (726–843) – when the production of sacred imagery in Byzantium was banned and existing works of figural religious art were destroyed – as a dividing mark between the early and middle Byzantine periods. Yet, while focused on the middle Byzantine era (the period between the end of Iconoclasm in 843 and the Sack of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade in 1204), this study extends beyond these chronological parameters in order to consider the roots of middle Byzantine attitudes toward cultural others in the latter years of Iconoclasm as well as the possible impact of material considered here on post-1204 conceptions of imperial power.

While Christianity was certainly the defining aspect of Byzantine culture, the Iconoclast controversy evinces the labile character of even the Christian dimension of this identity. Furthermore, as noted already, certain aspects of Greco-Roman tradition were still part of Byzantium's self-perceived heritage, particularly at the upper echelons of Byzantine society, the environment in which the works of art studied here circulated. In some instances, objects claim this antique heritage as part of Byzantine identity, but in other cases the classical is treated as foreign to Byzantine (qua Christian) culture. Indeed, Byzantine authors' perceptions of their relation to Greek and Roman tradition

shifted over time and even varied among writers of the same era.[14] Yet despite the persistent internal reformulations of what it meant to "be Byzantine," they consistently maintained a rhetoric of distinction between themselves and cultural "others," referring to these non-Byzantine groups by a variety of terms, including "barbaros" (barbarian) and words employing the prefix "allo-" (lit., "other").[15] While these labels sometimes encode a perception of binary relations between "self" and "other," in certain instances an attitude of shared culture or a practice of strategic assimilation of foreign elements reveals more responsive and flexible conceptualizations. As the following analyses of individual monuments and objects demonstrate, Byzantine identity was constantly negotiated in relation to internal and external factors. At the same time, it was consistently articulated as something ultimately distinct from "other" traditions, even when those differences were nuanced and mutable.[16]

Sasanian, Islamic, and Chinese elements found in middle Byzantine art have often been categorized as "oriental" or "Eastern." I avoid these reductive terms because they fail to situate foreign sources within the specific cultural and historical milieus from which they derive.[17] Furthermore, they are limited by a directional designator, orient or East, which is not always accurate. Some foreign cultures that acted as mediators of "oriental" motifs were located to the south (e.g., the Fatimids [909–1171]) or west (e.g., the Spanish Umayyads [756–1031]) of Byzantium. In instances where the sources for foreign elements can be associated with a specific dynasty or polity, I use these designators in order to achieve greater chronological, geographic, political, and cultural specificity for the original artistic model and to recognize the diverse groups that fall within the more general rubric of "medieval Islamic" culture. Of course the term "Islamic" is itself problematic, not least of all because the elements appropriated by Byzantium were rarely, if ever, related to the practices, beliefs, or material culture of the Islamic religion.[18] Nonetheless, Islam is the primary unifying factor of the diverse groups from which Byzantium adopted these artistic elements and therefore provides the most encompassing cultural indicator possible. Furthermore, this term is in keeping with Byzantine perception, which recognized Islam as a common denominator among these groups, while at the same time acknowledging the political, historical, and geographic distinctions that separated them.[19] In recognition of artistic continuity between the late antique Sasanian dynasty of Iran and subsequent Islamic groups – particularly the Syrian Umayyads and the Abbasids, who adopted and adapted Sasanian traditions – I employ the conflation "Sasanian-Islamic" in instances where an object or model cannot be readily distinguished as specifically Sasanian or Islamic or where insisting on a distinction would undermine appreciation of the artistic and ideological continuity between these groups.[20]

When discussing Byzantine iterations of Islamic models, I employ the term "Islamicizing," which expresses the fact that such material interprets Islamic

traditions for Byzantine purposes. Similarly, "classicizing" is used to refer to the Byzantine recasting of elements from Greco-Roman tradition. In both cases, I recognize that the use of foreign or past artistic forms by Byzantine artists was a process of translation, in which the original meanings of the adopted forms were unavoidably altered as they were made comprehensible within new contexts and for new viewers/users.[21]

I employ "indigenous" and "foreign" to distinguish between elements that can be associated with the artistic production of Byzantium (indigenous) versus elements that derive from outside that society, but can still be associated with a specific external cultural, historical, and/or geographical group (foreign). The term "hybrid" is used to denote an object or monument that draws from indigenous and foreign traditions, juxtaposes these sources in a manner that maintains consciousness of their mutual alterity, and generates meaning from the friction between disparate parts. I employ this definition while acknowledging, as noted earlier, that the "indigenous" and "foreign" cultures to which I refer were themselves the products of hybrid combinations that were in constant reformulation. I pay attention to the particular ways in which "Byzantine" or "foreign" artistic forms are constituted in specific objects.[22]

The term "exotic" is a key concept for this study and merits detailed explanation. It shares with "foreign" a position in contrast to "indigenous," but it also expresses a more complex and inflected set of relationships and ideas. While "foreign" conveys the fact of difference in an objective sense, "exotic" can be understood "more dynamically, as a mechanism regulating the fear and desire associated with awareness of the foreign (fear of difference, desire to know)."[23] The exotic represents a fluid, generative process through which cultural difference is negotiated and both foreign and indigenous identities are defined. Essential to the argument of this book is an understanding of exotic elements as active agents of meaning. Their adoption in Byzantine art is not the result of passive aesthetic "influences" or casual formal "borrowings." Exoticizing motifs and styles represent powerful gestures aimed at the resolution of the curiosities, pleasures, and anxieties spurred by encounters with cultural others and their artistic traditions.[24]

A second key concept employed in this study is "cosmopolitanism," which I understand as an awareness of cultural traditions beyond one's own and, more importantly, a willingness to draw from these nonindigenous sources in the formulation of one's own identity. Being cosmopolitan is not limited to participation in a common visual culture, in which forms and meanings operate consistently across divisions of geography, religion, ethnicity, and political allegiance. Rather, the inversion or distortion of other visual languages – demonstrating the desire and ability to translate the foreign into something meaningful in indigenous terms – is here considered to be equally,

if not more, evident of a truly cosmopolitan identity.[25] In this respect, my definition emphasizes the local character of cosmopolitanism, which remains specific and self-interested even while purporting an alliance with universal values and identities.[26] I see Byzantine imperial cosmopolitanism as an attitude that claims participation in the world as a means to express control over it and understand it as fundamentally linked to an attitude of and ambition for cultural and political hegemony.[27]

The word "adoption" is employed as a neutral term for the Byzantine use of foreign artistic elements.[28] As noted earlier, in order to characterize the diversity of artistic adoptions at work in the objects and monuments studied here, I also propose the terms "emulation," "appropriation," "expropriation," "parity," and "incomparability." Each of the latter terms represents a particular dynamic of adoption that is inflected differently from the others. "Emulation" is understood as a form of competitive imitation, in which foreign artistic sources were copied in order to demonstrate the Byzantines' ability to master the artistic language of an adversary and thereby express symbolic domination over an opposing group. Emulation also entails the assimilation of foreign elements into Byzantine programs.[29]

"Appropriation" represents the self-conscious adoption of a foreign element in a strategic fashion. In contrast to emulation, which involves a degree of assimilation, appropriation preserves distinctions between indigenous and foreign forms, and it juxtaposes these disparate elements in a meaningful way. In instances of appropriation, foreign features cooperate with indigenous elements to produce a unified message.[30] "Expropriation" embodies an extreme form of appropriation in which an element that has been extracted from a foreign artistic tradition is modified so as to create a new meaning that departs radically from its original significance. Expropriation can involve the intentional distortion or inversion of a foreign motif or style in order to serve the purposes of the adopting group.[31]

"Parity" entails the careful selection and promotion of artistic forms or symbolic references that possess consistent meaning in both the foreign and indigenous contexts. It can be used to express notions of shared identity between otherwise distinct cultural groups. Finally, "incomparability," a mode antithetical to parity, highlights the perception of irreconcilable differences between indigenous and foreign artistic elements and the cultures they represent. As in processes of appropriation and expropriation, incomparability emphasizes fundamental disparities through strategies of visual and conceptual juxtaposition, but incomparability does not entail the cooperation of foreign and indigenous elements in a single program. All of these terms – adoption, emulation, appropriation, parity, expropriation, and incomparability – avoid the passive, temporary, and unmotivated connotations that burden terms such as "borrowing" and "influence."[32] They emphasize instead the active and self-conscious nature

of Byzantine deployments of foreign artistic elements and the meaningful role that exotic features play in imperial programs.

Throughout this study, I foreground the particular sociohistorical situations enveloping processes of artistic interaction in order to highlight the possible motivations behind them. The main chapters follow a roughly chronological sequence, allowing for larger patterns to emerge over time. Yet I do not wish to suggest that the dynamics of adoption at play in a given work of art are necessarily limited to its particular historical circumstance, or to imply a hierarchy of sophistication between strategies employed in earlier periods as opposed to later ones. Rather, I see the various solutions for incorporating foreign elements into middle Byzantine imperial art and ideology to be different – but equally valuable and viable – possibilities for accomplishing a common task: the effective articulation of imperial power. Furthermore, the modes highlighted in each chapter are not entirely discrete. They represent nuances in the ways particular motifs or concepts are deployed rather than finite distinctions between individual works of art.

As explained in the Introduction, this book responds to a formulation of the official imperial image first articulated in the early twentieth century, which was shaped in part by nationalist values that, despite their varying forms, ultimately promoted a concept of empires as essentially hegemonic entities preserved by virtue of their ancient authority and immutable natures. My own perspective endorses a model that allows for difference and fluidity to enrich, rather than undermine, imperial integrity and control. This vision is, of course, a product of the present historical moment. Currents of late twentieth-century thought – specifically the social and academic ideologies of multiculturalism, transculturalism, and postcolonialism, which were moving at full force during my own intellectual formation – fundamentally shape how I and others of this era think about identity, power, and their representation and dissemination. Rather than resisting the intellectual legacy of the present historical moment, it seems more profitable to give voice to the new perspectives it affords while remaining conscious of its constructed and impermanent nature, and thereby open to the ways in which it both explains and occludes the past.[33] Furthermore, in staking a claim for what this moment contributes to our understanding of history, it is also essential to credit the ways in which earlier scholars made essential and enduring contributions to the present dialogue. While critiquing late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars' approaches and biases, I make every effort to retain and foreground those aspects of their work that stand the test of time and hope that despite the experiences and biases that shape my own perception of the past, the following interpretations might offer, in their own ways, some contributions of lasting value.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BMGS	*Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*
CSHB	*Corpus scriptorum historiae byzantinae*, edited by Barthold Georg Niebuhr et al. 50 vols. Bonn: E. Weber, 1828–97.
DOC	*Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*, edited by Alfred R. Bellinger and Philip Grierson. 5 vols. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1966–99.
DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
EI	*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. 12 vols. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960–2005.
GOB	*The Glory of Byzantium*, edited by Helen Evans and William Wixom. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997.
JÖB	*Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik*
LIMC	*Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae*, edited by Hans Christopher Ackerman and Jean-Robert Gisler. 8 vols. Zürich: Artemis Verlag, 1981–97.
ODB	*Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, edited by Alexander Kazhdan et al. 3 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Unless otherwise noted, all dates are C.E. (Common Era).

The spellings of proper names and specialized terms are adapted from the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* and the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. To facililate readability for the nonspecialist, diacritical marks have been simplified or eliminated in the main text and notes; when used in sources, however, they are retained in the bibliographic citations so as to remain faithful to the original publications.

An earlier version of Chapter 5 appeared as Alicia Walker, "Middle Byzantine Aesthetics and the Incomparability of Islamic Art: The Architectural Ekphraseis of Nikolaos Mesarites," *Muqarnas* 27 (2010): 79–101.

In the following text, "Iconoclasm" is capitalized when referring to the historical era (ca. 726–843) in Byzantium, as well as to groups on either side of the controversy (i.e., "Iconophiles," "Iconoclasts"). The same term in lowercase (i.e., "iconoclasm") refers to anti-image attitudes or actions in general.

INTRODUCTION

Imaging Emperor and Empire in the Middle Byzantine Era

THE TENTH-CENTURY BYZANTINE CHRONICLER THEOPHANES *CONTINUATUS* reported for the year 830 that, upon the return of the courtier and diplomat John the Grammarian (d. 867) from a delegation to the Abbasid court at Baghdad, the latter advised the emperor Theophilos (r. 829–42) on the construction of an Islamicizing palace. This building, the Bryas (discussed further in Chapter 1), was "in imitation of Arab [palaces] and in no way differing from them in form or decoration."[1] The account demonstrates ninth-century imperial recognition of the prestige of "Arab" art and a desire to simulate the experience of an Abbasid courtly environment. Standing as a chronological bookend to Theophilos's Bryas, a late twelfth-century building in the imperial palace at Constantinople, the Mouchroutas Hall (discussed extensively in Chapter 5), likewise attests to Byzantine emulation of foreign prototypes. The building was the work of "a Persian hand," that is to say, a Seljuq artist. The chronicler who describes the hall, Nikolaos Mesarites (d. 1220), fully recognizes the aesthetic power of this Islamicizing work of art, which for him inspires "insatiable enjoyment….not hidden, but on the surface."[2]

These two palaces offer important evidence for the adoption of foreign motifs and styles in Byzantine architecture and are often cited to illustrate cross-cultural interaction between Byzantium and the medieval Islamic world. Less commonly emphasized is the fact that both accounts attest to *imperial* patronage of exoticizing art. In this way, they participate in the construction of a cosmopolitan image of the Byzantine emperor that drew from foreign artistic

traditions to express Byzantine political supremacy. Like any imperial commission, these buildings were not merely aesthetic undertakings aimed at creating luxurious environments for the pleasure of the ruler and his entourage. They were also statements of imperial power that contributed to an "image" of authority projected through all facets of Byzantine visual culture, including art, architecture, and ceremony.[3]

Foreign elements appear in imperial imagery only selectively. Indeed, exoticizing motifs and styles are not a standard aspect of the middle Byzantine emperor's "official" depiction. Rather, they represent episodic ruptures within an otherwise highly formulaic articulation of power that promoted the middle Byzantine emperor as a universal leader reigning through divine endorsement. He is typically shown blessed by Christ, the Virgin Mary, or select saints. This typology is well illustrated in the numismatic record.[4] Coins, particularly in gold, consistently employ this iconographic type throughout the middle Byzantine period. *Nomisma* of the emperors John I Tzimisces (r. 969–76) and John II Komnenos (r. 1118–43), for instance, depict on the reverse an image of the ruler positioned frontally, wearing conventional regalia, and blessed by the Virgin Mary (Fig. 1a and b).[5] On the obverse, an image of Christ reminds the viewer of the Christomimetic (Christ-like) nature of the emperor's authority: Just as the Son of God reigns in Heaven, so the emperor rules on earth.[6] Intended for mass consumption, these coins traveled throughout the empire and throughout the ages, promulgating official imperial iconography and the ideologies of divine endorsement and Christomimesis that it encodes.[7]

Depictions in ivory, marble, mosaic, metalwork, and manuscripts also illustrate the official image of the emperor. A mid-tenth-century ivory plaque portraying Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (r. 945–59) (Fig. 2) and a page from a Gospel book depicting the twelfth-century emperor John II Komnenos (r. 1118–43) and his son Alexios (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Urb. gr. 2, fol. 10v) (Fig. 3) convey imperial authority through the topos of divine support.[8] In the ivory, the proximity of physiognomy between Constantine VII and Christ articulates the emperor's Christomimetic nature. In these and other imperial depictions, the ruler becomes an emblem of perfect *taxis*, or order. His composed and idealized form represents the similarly regulated and virtuous nature of the empire he ruled.[9] Among the most powerful articulations of this concept was that found in the Byzantine imperial throne room, the Chrysotriklinos, located in the Great Palace in Constantinople. Although the structure is no longer extant, ceremonial treatises explain that decorations added to the chamber in the mid-ninth century transformed it into a kind of *tableau vivant* of imperial ideology. When he assumed the royal seat, the emperor was positioned directly below an image of Christ enthroned. This juxtaposition established an unmistakable parallelism between heavenly and earthly regents. As a poetic inscription encircling the



a



b

1a. *Histamenon Nomisma* of John I Tzimisces (r. 969–76), Byzantine, 969–76, gold, diam. 2.2 cm, wt. 4.37 g, Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, D.C., BZC.1957.4.84. © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, D.C.

1b. *Hyperpyron Nomisma* of John II Komnenos (r. 1118–43), Byzantine, 1122–37 (?), gold, diam. 3.3 cm, wt. 4.33 g, Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, D.C., BZC.1948.17.3404. © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, D.C.

room proclaimed, the Chyrsotriklinos, or gold–throne room, was transformed into a Christotriklinos, the throne room of Christ.[10]

The historical record suggests that the audience for this imagery was deeply invested in its meanings and preservation. When the emperor Isaac I Komnenos (r. 1057–9) issued a coin that departed from the standard imperial typology by depicting the emperor in military, rather than ceremonial, attire and equipped with a prominent, unsheathed sword (Fig. 4), Byzantine commentators censured this innovative image on the grounds that it implied that the emperor's authority was gained by means of military acumen, not through the power of God.[11] Their response indicates that the official image of the emperor and the ideologies it perpetuated were constructions on which both ruler and ruled depended. Deviations from this expected formula in the public domain were not easily tolerated.[12]

Still, other typologies for imperial authority did exist. Although less prevalent in the official realm, Old Testament figures, foremost King David, offered an alternative rhetorical vocabulary for conveying imperial power in both texts and images. Beyond the Judeo-Christian tradition, Greco-Roman mythology and history also provided a range of gods, heroes, and rulers who served as prototypes and antitypes of the Byzantine emperor in word and image.[13] Furthermore, the descriptions of the Bryas Palace and Mouchroutas Hall attest to the possibility of expressing royal authority by still another means: Through the adoption of foreign artistic models. These buildings, preserved only in the textual record, are joined by extant portable works of art that likewise incorporate exotic iconographic and stylistic elements into programs that represent the Byzantine emperor – or his office – in literal and figurative terms. They demonstrate that the expression of political authority and identity was not limited to an immutable and hermetic official iconography of divine endorsement



2. Plaque showing the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (r. 945–59) crowned by Christ, Byzantine, mid-tenth century, ivory, ca. 19 by 10 cm, State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.



3. John II Komnenos (r. 1118–43) and his son Alexios, frontispiece to a Gospel book, Byzantine, twelfth century, pigment on vellum, 18.5 by 12 cm, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Urb. gr. 2, fol. 10v. By permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. © 2010 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

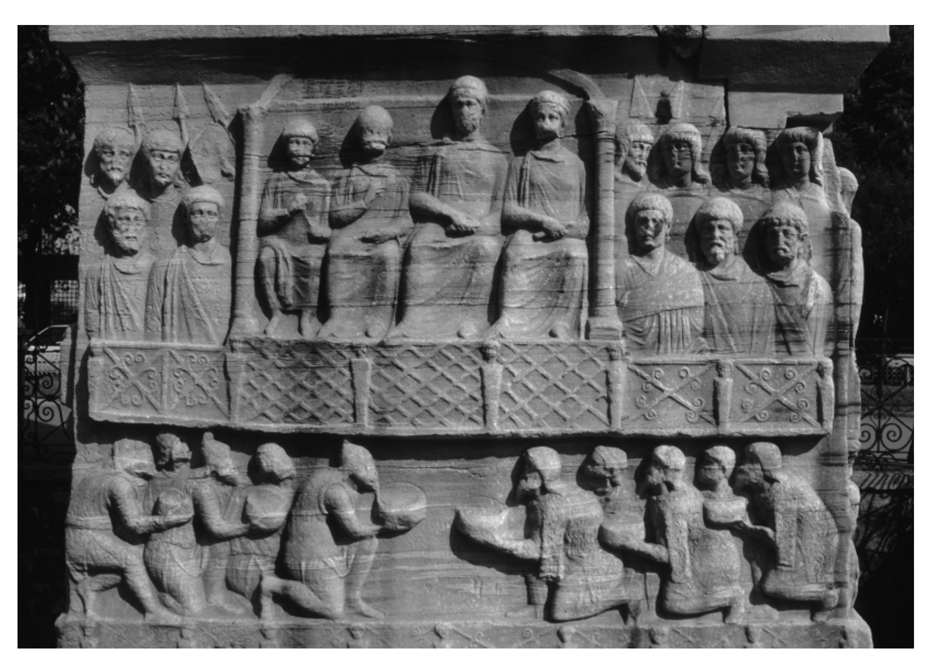



4. *Histamenon* of Isaac I Komnenos (r. 1057–9), Constantinople, Byzantine, 1057–9, gold, diam. 2.5 cm, wt. 4.37 g, Harvard Art Museums, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Bequest of Thomas Whittemore, 1951.31.4.1590. Photo: Imaging Department © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

or to the perpetuation of Greek and Roman precedents and biblical typologies, but could also respond to and participate in a contemporary, cross-cultural visual dialogue of royal power and prestige.

In advocating for the recognition of Byzantine imperial art as innovative and responsive, this study builds upon the work of numerous scholars working across disciplines who argue for interpreting Byzantium as an open and flexible culture and for judging imperial ideology as adaptive over time.[14] Yet I approach this common goal through a different path, by considering the incorporation of *foreign* iconographic motifs and stylistic features into middle Byzantine imperial imagery, a theme that has not previously been the focus of extended study.[15] Earlier considerations of imperial imagery and ideology generally conclude that Byzantium's apparent conservatism is in fact an ongoing "invention of tradition."[16] According to these studies, the message of Byzantine power remained potent because it was subtly refashioned over time: Both its overt conservatism and its covert innovation were essential to its survival. In contrast, my approach focuses on works of art that operate outside of traditional iconographies and therefore embody more radical departures from the official imperial image. They point to Byzantine awareness of and reaction to foreign cultures, which resulted in a cosmopolitan notion of Byzantine imperial identity that operated alongside conventional iconographies and ideologies of divinely endorsed universal dominion.

Within medieval ruler imagery, eclecticism and permeability are not unique features of middle Byzantine imperial art. In fact, the adoption of nonindigenous iconography is more often associated with upstart or dependent medieval polities of the tenth to thirteenth centuries – like the Armenian court at Aghtamar or the Norman court at Palermo in Sicily – where the royal iconographies of Byzantium and various Islamic dynasties were copied in an effort to stake claims to political and cultural relevance.[17] In these situations, Byzantium is the model, the universal power in the image of which smaller and/or newer rivals and clients inevitably defined themselves and from which these lesser polities appropriated iconographies of rulership. To posit that cross-cultural adoptions also characterize Byzantine imperial imagery and ideology runs against an expectation for the preservation of Byzantine supremacy and homogeneity. In what follows, I argue that recognition of and adoption from



5. Relief showing the *proskynesis* of conquered foreigners, Obelisk of Theodosios I (r. 379–95), Byzantine, ca. 390, marble, Hippodrome, Constantinople (Istanbul, Turkey). © Vanni / Art Resource, NY.

foreign art did not require Byzantium to relinquish its claim to superior cultural and political status. Indeed, more often than not, the objects and monuments studied here introduce iconographic and stylistic innovations that are engineered to affirm the notion of Byzantium's privileged status and universal dominion, even in the face of economic, military, and political realities that indicated otherwise.

In addition, it must be noted that middle Byzantine adoption of foreign artistic features was not unprecedented. Early Byzantine imperial images already incorporated exotic elements, albeit in a more literal fashion than that found in the middle Byzantine era. For instance, some early Byzantine works of art perpetuate a feature of Roman iconography by depicting prostrate barbarians who recognize the triumphant emperor.[18] A late fourth-century relief on the base of the Obelisk of Theodosios I (r. 379–95), located along the *spina* (central platform) of the Hippodrome in Constantinople, shows conquered foreigners paying homage to the Byzantine ruler (Fig. 5).[19] Their exotic headgear and generously bearded faces clearly mark them as originating from outside the Byzantine sphere. Indeed, their attributes identify the group to the left as eastern foes, most likely Sasanians, and that to the right as northern enemies, probably Goths, thereby demonstrating the universal power of Theodosios, who controlled people and domains in all directions.[20] These figures embody the

edges of empire, where territory was expanded and secured. Their obeisance attests to the integrity and prowess of Byzantine universal rule.

Consistency with Roman models characterizes the Byzantine imperial image in subsequent centuries as well, but increasingly connections are drawn between the emperor and Christian emblems of authority. A sixth-century polyptych, the so-called Barberini Ivory, which may portray Justinian I (r. 527–65), shows Tellus (the personification of earth) reaching toward the emperor's foot in a gesture of submission, a Sasanian figure cowering behind the emperor's rearing horse as he humbly touches the ruler's spear, and an exotic array of barbarian supplicants processing in the register below (Fig. 6).[21] The costumes worn and gifts carried by the foreign figures on the left evoke their Sasanian origin and the eastern limits of Byzantine dominion, while the figures to the right suggest a more distant territory, perhaps the farther lands of India.[22] The emperor's power is affirmed by the personification of victory, Nike, who reaches to crown him. More importantly, Christ appears at the apex of the scene and extends his hand to bless the ruler. This image joins a Roman vocabulary of terrestrial dominion with a Christian iconography of divinely sanctioned authority. In both the obelisk and the ivory, empire and its integrity are conveyed through the ruler's unquestionable mastery of the people at its edges, the barbarians along its borders.

The literal depiction of exotic peoples and the worldly expression of imperial authority that it embodies were certainly not the predominant images promoted in the middle Byzantine period. That position was inarguably occupied by the official iconography of divine endorsement discussed above. Indeed, the Roman-Byzantine theme of the prostrate barbarian no longer features prominently after Iconoclasm.[23] This may be due to the fact that Byzantium's territories had significantly contracted since the time of Theodosios I and Justinian; to have depicted actual barbarians may have been an unwelcome reminder of how insecure imperial control had in fact become.[24] Nonetheless, exoticizing works of middle Byzantine art and architecture persist in constructing a comparable message of universal dominion and cultural superiority over other peoples. Rather than depicting foreigners in literal terms, middle Byzantine imperial art subtly deploys exotic iconographic and stylistic elements as surrogates for foreign cultures; while visually distinct from earlier imperial traditions, they are conceptually consistent with these precedents. Exoticizing works of art show that middle Byzantine imperial authority could be conceived to be as much of this world as it was of the divine sphere, as much a response to contemporary medieval reality as a perpetuation of seemingly immutable traditions from the Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman past.

The more periodic concepts of imperial power that these unofficial objects and monuments depict were no doubt intended for the most privileged and powerful audience in medieval Byzantium, the members of the imperial court.[25] The Bryas Palace and Mouchroutas Hall, for example, were both



6. Barberini polyptych, Constantinople (?), Byzantine, first half of the sixth century (?), ivory, 34.2 cm by 27.8 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France, OA 9063. Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY. Photo: Chuzeville.

privileged environments of the emperor and his entourage. Other works of art discussed in this study are characterized by the use of valuable materials and high levels of craftsmanship, which point to their production for the social elite. In addition they display complex iconographic programs that

patrons and designers could anticipate would be understood by the educated and discerning members of the Constantinopolitan court. These less conventional works of imperial art and architecture record shifting attitudes toward foreign cultures at the highest levels of society. They circulated among individuals who controlled the bulk of Byzantium's resources and served as the stewards of its destiny. In this respect, these objects and monuments claim an essential place in our understanding of Byzantine imperial imagery, ideology, and identity.

An active role for foreign iconography in imperial artistic programs is in keeping with the cosmopolitan character of Byzantine aristocratic culture that has emerged in studies over recent decades.[26] The middle Byzantine capital and court were dynamic and fluid realms, through which foreign objects and people regularly moved.[27] Furthermore, with the truncation of the empire over the course of the middle Byzantine era, especially as a result of the loss of territories to the Seljuqs in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the emperor was obliged to confront the reality of foreign threats along the ever-shrinking borders of his domain. He accomplished this task literally, by undertaking military expeditions against his enemies and engaging in diplomatic negotiations with their emissaries. Yet just as importantly, he – and his supporters – executed a symbolic defense of the empire and asserted the stability of imperial power through works of art and literature, even when such messages were at odds with political and military reality. It is the construction of this image of power that the present study explores.

Chapter 1, "Emulation. Islamic Imports in the Iconoclast Era – Power, Prestige, and the Imperial Image," documents how emperors ruling in the period just prior to the beginning of the middle Byzantine era incorporated foreign motifs into imperial imagery. Ninth-century works of art and architecture, especially silks, produced under the predominantly iconoclast Amorian dynasty (820–67) incorporate Sasanian-Islamic iconographic and stylistic features into Byzantine imperial architectural foundations and depictions of the emperor at the royal hunt. An interest in foreign iconography is often perceived as a compensation for the rejection of Christian figural representation during Iconoclasm. Instead, I propose that active emulation of exotic artistic forms should be understood as a form of cultural rivalry that mirrored competitive dynamics in other aspects of Byzantium's interaction with foreign groups, especially the Abbasid dynasty. I emphasize that the use of exotic forms in imperial imagery was not an invention of the Macedonian emperors (867–1056) but a continuation of earlier Iconoclast-era sensibilities.

Chapter 2, "Appropriation. Stylistic Juxtaposition and the Expression of Power," turns to the iconophile Macedonian dynasty, under which the imperial image is usually argued to have eventually assumed a distinctly Orthodox Christian visual vocabulary. In the domain of imperial imagery of the hunt

and triumph, however, a connection was maintained with Roman-Byzantine and Iconoclast era models. Recognition of iconoclast emperors as exemplars in these domains is apparent in the textual record as well. This continuity between the Iconoclast and Orthodox eras challenges the standard perception of iconoclast and iconophile dynasties as ideologically incompatible. Through analysis of a well-known ivory box, known as the Troyes Casket, which shows images of imperial triumph and hunt in tandem with distinctly Chinese iconographic motifs, I propose that analogous concepts of universal rule underlie both the iconoclast and iconophile deployments of exotic elements: mastery of the visual languages of these cultural "others" signified conquest of the cultures themselves.

In Chapter 3, "Parity. Crafting a Byzantine-Islamic Community of Kings," I continue to trace Macedonian openness to foreign cultures through consideration of the fascinating array of luxurious and marvelous objects that passed as diplomatic gifts between Byzantine and Islamic potentates, as recorded in *The Book of Gifts and Rarities*, an Arabic text penned by an eleventh-century Fatimid courtier, Ahmad ibn al-Rashid ibn al-Zubayr. When sending gifts to Christian allies, the emperor typically selected objects of religiopolitical significance, foremost fragments of the True Cross, which attested to the Christian identity of giver and receiver and bound them together as common descendents of the one True King, Christ. For Muslim recipients of imperial gifts, however, this sort of Christian, sacred object would have been obviously inappropriate. Passages in *The Book of Gifts* elucidate the kinds of things that Byzantine and Islamic rulers selected in order to evoke shared models of ideal rulership: a saddle of Alexander the Great and a gem encrusted vest decorated with the Seal of Solomon. These gifts employed mutually recognized models of exemplary kingship to communicate a sense of parity between giver and receiver. Analysis of additional texts and extant objects further attests to the notion of a Byzantine-Islamic "community of kings" and an intersecting ruler ideology that affirms the relationships established through these gifts.

During the transition from the Macedonian to the Komnenian dynasty (1057–1185), a more polemical attitude toward foreign cultures emerged, a change in outlook that may reflect the mounting insecurity of Byzantium's eastern borders, threatened by the growing military strength of the Seljuqs. In Chapter 4, "Expropriation. Rhetorical Images of the Emperor and the Articulation of Difference," I relate this shifting perspective to a twelfth-century ivory casket decorated with eight scenes portraying Herakles, Alexander the Great, St. George, and a cross-legged lute player seated on a throne, the latter figure clearly deriving from medieval Islamic courtly imagery. All eight vignettes reflect models of good and bad rulership discussed in middle Byzantine imperial panegyrics. I argue that the images operate according to the strategy of *syncresis* (comparison), a standard rhetorical technique in middle Byzantine

imperial encomia (speeches composed and delivered by courtiers in honor of the emperor). I employ the Darmstadt Casket to explore the potential role of nonimperial voices – specifically, members of the court – in the articulation of the imperial image and to examine the way in which these groups defined imperial identity in relation to the imagery of a cultural "other." I suggest that the object served as an "unofficial" panegyric in material form.

At the end of the middle Byzantine era, a similarly polemical attitude pervades the Byzantine scholar Nikolaos Mesarites' (d. 1220) description of the Mouchroutas Hall, a twelfth-century building constructed at the imperial palace in Constantinople, which is no longer preserved. Chapter 5, "Incomparability. The Aesthetics of Imperial Authority," offers a close reading of this text, in which Mesarites identifies the decoration of the hall as the work of a "Persian" (Seljuq) hand and indicates that it represents images of Muslim courtiers enjoying the pleasures of palace life. Mesarites stages the hall as a backdrop for the downfall of the deposed emperor, John "the Fat" Komnenos (d. 1200). Mesarites' text is commonly cited as evidence of Byzantine emulation of twelfth-century Seljuq palace decoration, but it has never been examined as a rhetorical construction reflecting Byzantine reception and interpretation of Islamic art with respect to imperial identity and power. I propose that Mesarites evokes rhetorical and visual comparisons of John the Fat and the Islamic building in which he appears as antitheses to imperial images familiar from contemporary Byzantine texts and ceremonial. As such, the shortcomings of John – and his analogue, the "Persian"-Islamic work of art – emerge through comparison with the standard image of Byzantine imperial power.

In the Conclusion I extend the discussion to the post-1204 period, when Byzantine imperial contenders were exiled to multiple provisional courts from which they plotted their returns to power. In particular, scholars identify the court at Trebizond on the Black Sea as an environment in which non-Byzantine artistic styles and exotic themes played an essential role in the expression of imperial power and legitimacy. This cosmopolitan orientation is typically explained as the result of the exiled status of Trapezuntine rulers, who were marginalized to an isolated, eastern locale in which they were open to the impact of non-Byzantine cultural currents. In contrast, this study affirms recent scholarship that proposes that the Trapezuntine satellite court might be better understood as continuing and further developing a cosmopolitan feature of Byzantine imperial culture already apparent in the pre-1204 era.

THE "OFFICIAL" IMPERIAL IMAGE AND THE "SUCCESS" OF "ORIENTAL" ART AT THE BYZANTINE COURT

Many scholars who have studied Byzantine imperial authority – and medieval kingship more broadly – privilege the Christ-like or priestlike identity of

rulers in the Middle Ages.[28] My aim is not to disprove these interpretations. Rather, I expand the standard perception of ruler ideology and imagery to show how it reflects not only the ideals of Christomimesis (similarity to Christ) and Caesaropapism (secular and sacred authority united in a single office), but also the realities of cross-cultural artistic and ideological interaction. Before embarking on the focused analyses of individual works of Byzantine art, however, it is useful to trace briefly the historiographic roots of the two themes I seek to unite: the Byzantine imperial image and foreign impact on Byzantine art.

As Thomas Mathews notes, the genesis of art-historical scholarship on the Byzantine imperial image can be localized among scholars – including Ernst Kantorowicz (1895–1963), Andreas Alföldi (1895–1981), and especially André Grabar (1896–1990) – who in various ways were the products of the great European empires that came to an end in the early twentieth century.[29] Whether their interests in and interpretations of the imperial office were shaped by their personal "nostalgia for lost empire," as Mathews suggests, remains open to debate.[30] But there is no doubt that their scholarship emerged from a historical and intellectual moment when notions of cultural and, more specifically, national identity were actively formulated and self-consciously brought to bear on interpretations of the medieval past.[31] This situation requires that some appraisal of historical context be undertaken in tandem with any serious consideration of scholarship dating from this era or evolving from the interpretive traditions that it founded.[32]

In the case of Byzantine imperial iconography, André Grabar stands uncontested as the driving force behind the formulation of the official image of the emperor. For this reason, his scholarship and the circumstances of its production merit special attention. In 1936 Grabar published the seminal study on Byzantine imperial art, *L'Empereur dans l'art byzantin*, which remains the most comprehensive consideration of the topic.[33] In a series of later works, he also addressed the issue of foreign impact on middle Byzantine art, in particular through his 1951 article "Le succès des arts orientaux à la cour byzantine sous les Macédoniens," which continues to be a key source cited on this theme.[34] The fundamental outlines of Grabar's arguments still shape scholarship today. Yet in comparison with other prominent early twentieth-century art historians, Grabar has received relatively minimal historiographic appraisal, perhaps in part because his intellectual formation began in Russia, during the closing years of the Romanov dynasty (1613–1917) and early years of the Bolshevik Revolution, a cultural-historical context that is distinctly different from the Western European environments in which other notable scholars of medieval art and history were trained.[35]

In *L'Empereur dans l'art byzantin*, Grabar conducts a systematic survey of imperial imagery from the fourth to the fifteenth centuries, analyzing visual and textual evidence both thematically ("Première partie: Les monuments et

les themes") and chronologically ("Deuxième partie: Étude historique").[36] He defines the "official" image of the ruler as one that depicts the enduring power and authority of the imperial office through the representation of monarchy by divine right.[37] This ideology, he argues, creates an imperial "mystique," which imbricates Byzantine political imagery with that of the Orthodox faith.[38] He strives to demonstrate the coherency and vitality of this visual representation throughout Byzantine history and argues that the notion of the divine right to rule had roots in Hellenistic and Roman traditions, but was fundamentally transformed through its accommodation of Christian faith.[39] While he does not deny that imperial imagery changed over time, he emphasizes continuity over periodicity, foregrounding the stability of imperial iconography and localizing its ideological import in its most conservative and Christian characteristics. Grabar argues for the power, logic, and vitality of the Byzantine imperial image, making sense of a visual tradition that had previously been maligned as incoherent and derivative. Writing at a historical moment when Byzantium was still commonly perceived as a despotic and corrupt society, he formulates a revisionist thesis that was in part a defense against a body of literature that portrayed Byzantium as responsible for the decline of the ancient Roman world.[40]

Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russian scholars active in the period immediately prior to Grabar's scholarly formation were particularly invested in the historical evaluation of Byzantium because Russia was understood as a direct heir to the Byzantine legacy and therefore implicated in any judgment on its character. In debates surrounding Russia's affiliation with Eastern versus Western civilization, Byzantium played a prominent, if ambivalent, role in formulations of both positive and negative assessments of modern Russian identity.[41] Concern over the nature of Russian identity and its Western versus Eastern affiliations also impacted emerging notions of Russian nationalism. Particularly among academics specializing in the study of eastern regions of the Russian Empire, the concept of multi-ethnic nationalism grew in popularity. It promoted the active preservation of diverse local cultural affiliations under an overarching pan-Russian identity.[42]

At the University of St. Petersburg, Grabar was a student of the renowned scholar of Byzantine art and archaeology Nikodim Kondakov (1844–1925), who actively promoted multi-ethnic nationalism and who, like many of his colleagues, perceived nation building as an integral part of his academic vocation.[43] As Vera Tolz observes, Kondakov clearly articulates this position in his multivolume work on Russian art and antiquities, jointly published with Ivan Tolstoi in 1889.[44] The authors celebrate Russian art and national identity as conglomerate phenomena, forged from the successful fusion of varied traditions including those of the Crimea, the Caucasus, Persia, Byzantium, and Central Asia. Yet even within the multi-ethnic formulations of scholars like

Kondakov, Russian culture emerges as the overarching and unifying character of the nation as a whole. In the final assessment, pannational identity is synonymous with pan-Russian (and generally Orthodox Christian) identity.[45] Perhaps most crucially, while multiple cultures are understood to have contributed to the modern Russian character in the historical past, contemporary ethnic affiliations are to be cultivated on a local level, but are not invited to define any portion of shared national identity.[46]

The multi-ethnic national concept at the core of Kondakov's vision for Russian art history resonates, I propose, with Grabar's own formulations of Byzantine imperial imagery and identity. Indeed, the fact that Grabar was among the only scholars of his generation to address so thoroughly the topics of both imperial imagery and the impact of the "orient" on Byzantine art argues in favor of viewing him as a scion of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century debates over the Eastern versus Western nature of the Russian Empire as well as Byzantium's position within these cultural formulations.[47] While foregrounding a Roman-Christian concept of the imperial identity, he explicitly rejects the false dichotomy of an Eastern or Western nature for Byzantium. Instead, he perceives Byzantine imperial art to manifest a harmonious convergence of diverse cultural currents, including Roman, Hellenistic, Christian, and Persian.

This attitude is apparent in the conclusion to *L'Empereur*, where Grabar directly responds to the theories of the Polish-Austrian art historian Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941), whose well-known and controversial book *Orient oder Rom* was published in 1901.[48] Strzygowski localizes the corruption and decline of Greco-Roman culture in late antiquity and claims that early Christian art had succumbed to the pernicious influences of Jewish/Islamic "Semitic" forces.[49] Contrary to this position, Grabar states that in defining Byzantine artistic identity, one need not choose between Rome and the Orient. Observing that "oriental" elements had already entered Roman imperial art in the second and third centuries, well before the emergence of Byzantium, he argues that even in the domain of foreign "influence," thematic and iconographic continuity with the imperial imagery of the ancient Roman Empire exists.[50] In this way he counters Strzygowski's theory that "orientalizing" features of Byzantine art evince its corruption and preserves a claim for Byzantium as a medieval guardian of the mantle of Western civilization.[51] Yet while Grabar promotes the Byzantine imperial tradition as a rich confluence of multiple cultural traditions, the Hellenistic-Roman and Christian factors clearly dominate Byzantine imperial identity, and they together determine the ideological content of the imperial image.[52]

A crucial result of his position is that when Grabar encounters works of art that challenge the overarching theory of Christian-Roman kingship, he marginalizes them within the realm of courtly leisure. In some instances he further

distances them from the Orthodox tradition through association with the heretical rulers of the Iconoclast period. In other cases he omits an exoticizing work of art from discussion altogether or ignores its foreign features. Grabar's ultimate promotion of an essentially homogenous nature for Byzantine imperial imagery and ideology – defined by Christian Orthodoxy on the one hand and Greco-Roman heritage on the other – reflects the overarching desire for cultural unity and perpetuity that characterized early twentieth-century nationalist ideologies, including those that advocated multi-ethnic recognition. In Grabar's articulation of the imperial image, non-Byzantine elements can be discerned within the overall picture, but they do not play a meaningful role.

The Troyes Casket (discussed extensively in Chapter 2) serves as a prime example of Grabar's approach. The object incorporates an image of imperial triumph on its lid (see Figs. 17 and 21) and depictions of the royal hunt on its front and back panels (see Figs. 24 and 25). The side panels, however, strikingly contrast these relatively conventional scenes: At each end of the casket is rendered a fabulous bird, which unquestionably follows the model of a medieval Chinese motif known as the *feng huang* (see Figs. 30 and 31). In his assessment of foreign and indigenous iconography on the Troyes Casket, Grabar fragments the object, discussing the lid of the Troyes Casket in a section titled "L'Empereur à cheval," and the front panel ten pages later in a section titled "La chasse."[53] He characterizes both the lid and the front panels as predominantly "decorative" in character, thereby distancing them from the more ideologically significant images discussed in other sections of his study.[54] He neither illustrates nor discusses the *feng huang* panels, conveying a limited impression of the program as a whole. In this way the object is made to support a concept of Byzantium as the continuator of Christian-Roman imperial tradition along an enduring trajectory.[55]

Grabar does, however, acknowledge another "oriental" connection for the Troyes Casket. He cites a debt to Sasanian artistic models in the depiction of the hunt on the front panel, particularly the backward position of the riders, who assume the so-called Parthian Shot pose.[56] He then links the scene of the hunt on the Troyes Casket with Iconoclast models, positing that in an era when sacred figural imagery was forbidden, scenes of the hunt experienced exceptional prominence in imperial iconography.[57] Although he dates the Troyes Casket to the eleventh century, he repeatedly states that its program harkens back to the Iconoclast period, an affinity that in turn explains the "oriental" aspect of the Troyes program: "Les influences perso-arabes" acted upon Byzantine art with particular force during this unorthodox era, and through this "courant oriental," the theme of the hunt penetrated Byzantine art.[58] Localizing foreign artistic influence to a time of religious heresy implies that during Iconoclasm, the morally and spiritually weakened empire was open to infection from external forces. Once Byzantium regained its orthodoxy, it

slowly recovered its integrity and strength, eventually expelling foreign infiltrations from its imperial visual vocabulary. As such, the Troyes Casket remains an exception, a hold-over from an earlier, unorthodox era.

Grabar's interpretation of Byzantium's artistic interactions with other cultures becomes more nuanced in later studies, in which he increasingly recognizes Byzantine-Islamic participation in a shared artistic "koine" (intercultural visual language) with roots in Roman antiquity, especially in the courtly domain.[59] Indeed, it is reasonable to suggest that had Grabar written *L'Empereur dans l'art byzantin* at the end, rather than the beginning, of his career, the role of foreign elements in imperial iconography may have received a different treatment.[60] Still, a tendency to perceive Byzantine adoptions of "oriental" forms as limited to the decorative and pleasurable prevails in his work.[61] Subsequent scholarship on the topic of the imperial image – and the role of foreign elements within it – largely follows the boundaries Grabar established, emphasizing the Christian dimension of Byzantine imperial ideologies and marginalizing evidence of foreign artistic adoptions to the domain of palace frivolity.[62]

DIFFERENCE AND MUTABILITY IN THE MIDDLE BYZANTINE IMPERIAL IMAGE

Recognizing modern intellectual and historical forces that contributed to Grabar's formulation of the imperial image serves to highlight possibilities for expansion and refinement of his interpretations, particularly as concerns the role of exotic elements in middle Byzantine imperial art and the role of the "other" in the formulation of imperial identity. Needless to say, substantial work in numerous disciplines over the last half century has significantly realigned current perspectives on how group identity is constructed and how cultural diversity is negotiated. Postcolonial notions of "hybridity" and "difference" have increasingly shaped the way scholars view the nature of empires, which are understood as heterogenous conglomerations that survived because of adaptation to new circumstances and the successful accommodation of difference.[63] Empires thus emerge as composite formations, actively configured at the intersection of multiple social, ethnic, and historical currents.

In contributing to this larger discourse, the present study focuses on the domain of art and culture and therefore deals with what might be termed the symbolic or imagined realm of society. Still this is not to say that the attitudes reflected in the objects and monuments considered here are any less real or important than other bodies of evidence that shape our understanding of Byzantine imperial identity. As Edward Said posits in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), art and literature give the impression of transcending the everyday world because of their aesthetic nature.[64] As a result, they are easily depoliticized,

and the ways in which they encode political values and social attitudes are occluded. Yet, Said insists that works of art are not immune to imperial attitudes, references, and experiences. Writing about late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European fiction, Said sheds light on the way in which empire – and the negotiation of cultural others that it necessitates – weaves across the narratives of these novels, even when empire is not the ostensible subject of the literary work. He reconnects works of art and their interpretations with the imperialist ideologies and practices that informed them, a process that he argues enhances their worth because it illuminates their extra-aesthetic value. Understanding the connection between art and imperialism "does not reduce or diminish the novels' value as works of art: on the contrary, because of their worldliness, because of their complex affiliations with their real setting, they are more interesting and more valuable as works of art."[65] Similarly, I perceive the objects and monuments studied here as participants in the articulation of Byzantine Empire and the authority of its leader, even when they do not overtly claim empire as the subject of their programs. Despite the emperor's projections of an official image impervious to the effects of time and history, he too grappled with the negotiation of cultural others within and at the edges of his domain and was compelled to realign Byzantine identity in response to these confrontations.

Returning to the Troyes Casket, this shift in perspective allows us to pose new questions and approaches for Byzantine imperial art. Rather than seeing stylistic inconsistency as a shortcoming to be elided, we can interpret the *feng huang* motifs (see Figs. 30 and 31) as a visual statement of difference that was as essential to the meaning of the casket as the more conventional imperial iconography on the lid. By recognizing an interest in and command over exotic artistic forms as indicative of a broader ideological position, we can read these foreign elements as affirmations of Byzantine engagement with and responsiveness to other cultures. The combination of imperial and foreign imagery projects a cosmopolitan message of imperial power, but one in which the Byzantine ruler – and the artistic tradition that depicted him – maintain a claim to hegemony.

While Grabar perceives the palace as a realm of pleasure that did not participate in the serious work of maintaining the impression of the ruler's authority, I perceive the palace as a space in which this effort was continued, albeit by different means than those pursued in the official sphere. The unofficial, courtly domain of imperial imagery and ideology served a sophisticated and informed audience, who would have thought beyond the visual platitudes of official imagery and its message of unchanging universal dominion secured through divine endorsement.[66] Although representing diverse media and a broad chronological range, the objects and monuments considered here nonetheless attest to an alternative image of power communicated to a discerning

community of viewers. They reveal that the articulation of imperial identity was conceived in relation to a wide range of cultural trajectories that were not limited to the more conventional sources found in Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions, but could expand to encompass new artistic and ideological influxes from contemporary foreign cultures and thereby project responsive and innovative expressions of middle Byzantine imperial power.

CHAPTER ONE

EMULATION

Islamic Imports in the Iconoclast Era – Power, Prestige, and the Imperial Image

In order to understand the middle Byzantine imperial image, especially the role of foreign elements in this iconography, we must begin in the period prior to its formation, with imperial art of the eighth and ninth centuries.[1] The two phases of Byzantine Iconoclasm together spanned over a century (726–87 and 814–43). During this period, the question of whether Orthodox Christianity should condone the figural representation of Christ and other holy people forged deep rifts across Byzantine society. Because of their fundamental theological differences, anti-image iconoclast emperors and pro-image iconophile emperors are commonly assumed to have been ideologically incompatible.[2] Yet the final transition from iconoclasm to "orthodoxy" in 843 was not so absolute, in part because it took place within a single dynasty: The last iconoclast emperor, Theophilos (r. 829–42), was succeeded by his son Michael III (r. 842–67). Michael was only a child when he assumed the throne. During his minority (842–56), while his mother, Theodora, served as his regent, Iconoclasm was ended. Nonetheless, dynastic connections – and the need to preserve continuity of rule despite theological differences – complicated any clean break with the iconoclast past.

While concurring with earlier scholars who argue that during Iconoclasm restrictions on the depiction of holy figures led to a growth in Byzantine emulation of Islamic artistic models, I emphasize that increased exposure to and rivalry with Islamic cultures – particularly on the military front – contributed significantly to the decision to choose these sources.[3] The culmination of

Iconoclast-era emulation of Islamic models can be located in the second quarter of the ninth century during the reign of Theophilos, whose position as the last Iconoclast emperor makes him particularly relevant to the consideration of imperial imagery in the subsequent middle Byzantine era.[4] Theophilos's reign witnessed intensive interaction with the Islamic world through military conflict, diplomatic exchanges, economic relations, and cultural rivalry, the latter exemplified by his building an Islamicizing palace, the Bryas, in Constantinople and the production of imperial silks depicting the royal hunt, which show the emergence of Sasanian-Islamic elements in textile decoration. This combination of hot and cold warfare heightened the necessity to address the status of the Byzantine emperor relative to the Islamic world and particularly vis-à-vis the Abbasid caliph. Art played an essential role in articulating this relationship, primarily through the carefully engineered emulation of Islamic stylistic and iconographic elements in Byzantine imperial representations. The resulting images possess a hybrid character, indicating their dual sources in Byzantine and Islamic models. As such they define Byzantine imperial identity in part through the visual language of a cultural other, a strategy that continued to be at play in works of art produced during the middle Byzantine era and discussed in subsequent chapters. By mastering and adapting Islamic iconography and styles, the designers of ninth-century Byzantine imperial art metaphorically demonstrated conquest of and superiority over their rivals, in particular the Abbasid dynasty, and set in motion an approach to the expression of imperial power that remained viable across succeeding eras.

IMPERIAL IMAGERY IN THE ERA OF ICONOCLASM AND THE EMULATION OF FOREIGN ART

During Iconoclasm, when production and veneration of religious imagery was prohibited, the portrait of the emperor and the visual representation of his power turned to nonfigural and non-Christian means of expression.[5] During the reign of the Isaurian emperor Constantine V (r. 741–75), the cross was identified as an acceptable representation of Christ and approved for veneration, a status it shared with the Eucharist.[6] The cross had been closely associated with imperial legitimacy and divine endorsement from the time of Constantine I (r. 324–37) and actively functioned as an emblem of victorious rule during the Iconoclast era.[7] Yet secular themes also assumed an important role in conveying the authority of the ruler. In particular, hippodrome races and royal hunts operated as metaphors for imperial strength and valor.[8] Iconoclast depictions of the hunt and hippodrome were found in both monumental and portable objects, but few of these works of art are preserved today. For architectural programs, descriptions in texts constitute the majority of the remaining evidence. Among small-scale works of art, textiles provide the fullest – although still

limited – corpus of objects depicting hunt and hippodrome scenes. Throughout Byzantine history, high-quality textiles, particularly those fabricated from silk, were among the most valuable and prestigious works of art, and possession of them was generally limited to the upper echelons of society.[9] They were used for clothing, especially ceremonial robes worn at court, as well as for furniture covers and wall hangings.[10] Along with several monuments preserved only in the textual record, textiles depicting the royal hunt are the focus of this chapter.

The royal or aristocratic hunt was a prominent theme in the art of ancient Greece and Rome.[11] But the hunt also held an illustrious position in the image and ideology of rulership in the ancient and medieval Near East. From the Achaemenid era (550–330 B.C.E.) through the Parthian (ca. 250 B.C.E.–224 C.E.) and Sasanian (226–651) Empires to the early Islamic Umayyad (661–750) and Abbasid (750–1250) dynasties, imagery of the royal hunt was an essential element of ruler iconography.[12] Intriguingly, a number of Byzantine hunter textiles, including some depicting imperial figures, incorporate Sasanian-Islamic iconographic and stylistic features, indicating that Iconoclast works of art drew from multiple visual traditions in the process of articulating an image of imperial power (see Figs. 9 and 12–13).

While prohibitions against the depiction of holy figures explain the exclusion of Christian figural iconography from the visual vocabulary of imperial authority during Iconoclasm, they do not explain why works of art produced in this era turned to Islamic models.[13] Iconophile authors promote the notion that imperial interest in Islamic art was an aspect of Iconoclast heresy and accuse iconoclast emperors of being "Saracen-minded" (i.e., heretical or at least sympathetic to Islam) or "Babylonian tyrants" (i.e., oppressive rulers in the image of Eastern despots).[14] But the logic behind these arguments is obviously biased, serving later aims to promote the iconophile position.[15] To grasp the motivation behind the emulation of Islamic models, particularly in the domain of the imperial image, we must approach the question from the perspective of the Iconoclast era, not from the point of view of later iconophile critics.

In assessing Iconoclast-era emulation of Islamic art, it is necessary to consider the broader relationship of Byzantium with the Islamic world at this time. The late eighth and ninth centuries witnessed the overall growth and stabilization of Islamic society, particularly under the leadership of the Abbasid dynasty, whose capital at Baghdad became one of the foremost commercial, intellectual, and civic centers in the world.[16] As the Abbasids' wealth, status, and ambition grew, diplomatic exchanges and military confrontations between the Byzantine and Islamic worlds also intensified. Competition in the political, economic, and military domains easily translated into cultural rivalry, prompting the Byzantines to emulate contemporary Islamic art. This emulation was not, however, a sign of Islamic hegemony or Byzantine inferiority.

Nor, as iconophile writers claim, does it imply that Iconoclast emperors were "Saracen-minded." While emulation involves imitation, it does not require acceptance of or subjugation to the thing or group that is copied. Rather, it is here distinguished by an element of competition, indicating that the imitator vies with and ultimately seeks to surpass the individual or group being imitated.[17] Byzantine emulation of Sasanian-Islamic models in the Iconoclast era should be understood as a by-product of the increased confrontation and competition between these groups and as evidence of Byzantine attempts to establish their superiority over their Islamic adversaries in cultural and metaphoric terms.

SECULAR IMAGERY IN NINTH-CENTURY BYZANTINE SILKS

All the textiles discussed here have been dated to the eighth or ninth century and can be persuasively associated with one of the periods of Iconoclasm or their interim.[18] Unsurprisingly, the production of textiles depicting sacred imagery sharply declined during the Iconoclast era.[19] Weavings decorated with secular motifs filled the resulting gap. The subject matter of these nonreligious textiles includes animal and floral motifs as well as activities of a profane character, including hunting and hippodrome racing. Surviving secular textiles from the Iconoclast era are few in number. Approximately twenty-four fragments of hunting silks and fewer than ten fragments of hippodrome scenes are preserved.[20] Still the significance of these remains is amplified by the fact that they share a decorative vocabulary with other eighth- and ninth-century works of art known from texts. Themes of the hunt, hippodrome, flora, and fauna are attested in Iconoclast-era architectural decoration, specifically in the alterations made to churches. Although these monumental programs no longer exist, Byzantine architectural decorations and textiles hung in architectural spaces often shared the same decorative vocabulary.[21] For this reason, silks provide possible parallels for the appearance of monumental programs described in texts.

A well-known passage in the early eighth-century *Vita* of Saint Stephen records that the iconoclast emperor of the Isaurian dynasty, Constantine V (r. 741–75), removed sacred images from the Church of the Theotokos at the Blachernae in Constantinople and replaced them with murals depicting scenes from the hunt and hippodrome as well as motifs from nature, including animals and plants. The text recounts that around the time of the Iconoclast Council in 754,

> churches [were] scraped down and smeared with ashes because they contained holy images. And wherever there were venerable images of Christ or the Mother of God or the saints, these were consigned to the flames or were gouged out and smeared over. If, on the other hand, there

> were pictures of trees or birds or senseless beasts and, in particular, satanic horse-races, hunts, theatrical and hippodrome scenes, these were preserved with honor and given great lustre ... The tyrant [Constantine V] scraped down the venerable church of the all-pure Mother of God at the Blachernae, whose walls had previously been decorated with pictures of God's coming down to us, and going on to His various miracles .... Having thus suppressed all of Christ's mysteries, he converted the church into a storehouse of fruit and an aviary: for he covered it with mosaics [representing] trees and all kinds of birds and beasts, and certain swirls of ivy-leaves [enclosing] cranes, crows, and peacocks, thus making the church, if I may say so, altogether unadorned.[22]

Accounting for the Iconophile biases inherent in this source, it still attests to the increased production and prominence of hunting, hippodrome, and natural imagery in the Iconoclast period as well as its association with imperial patronage.

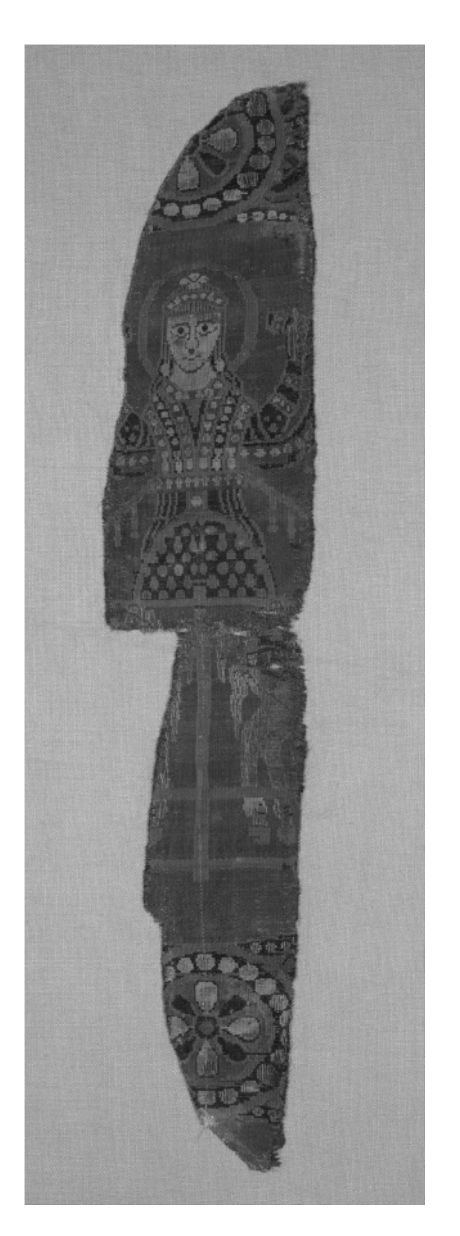
The *Vita* also recounts how Constantine removed the images of the Ecumenical Church Councils that had decorated the Milion in Constantinople and "were conspicuously displayed so as to proclaim the orthodox faith to country folk, foreigners, and the common people."[23] He replaced them with hippodrome scenes. The Milion marked the point of departure for all roads of the empire. It was therefore the symbolic center of the Byzantine world, and the images depicted there embodied the spirit of the empire as a whole. Removing sacred images from this place was a symbolic gesture implicating all of Byzantium. Of course the *Vita* reviles Constantine V for his iconoclast travesties, accusing him of having defiled holy images and profaned sacred spaces. Yet the secular motifs per se are not the object of criticism. The author denounces the inappropriate context of the decorations rather than their subject matter or form. In the proper venue, the images of animals and plants, hippodrome and hunt presumably would have prompted no objection.

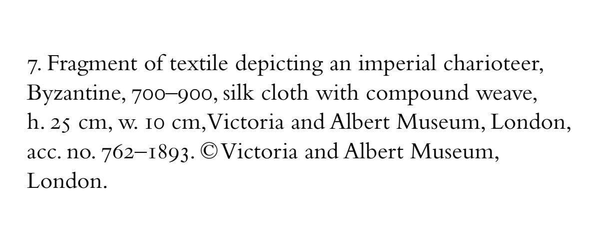
These descriptions of eighth-century Iconoclast decorative programs do not provide any details regarding the stylistic characteristics of the images depicted. In the same passage, however, Constantine V is described as "the new Babylonian tyrant."[24] The epithet "Babylonian" was ascribed to him because, like the biblical king Nebuchadnezzar, he was said to have forced his people to bow to his own image, persecuting those who refused to comply (Daniel 3).[25] Presumably the comparison was inspired by the iconoclast emperors' promulgation of their own images – for example, on coins (see Fig. 16.b) – at the same time that they prohibited and destroyed portraits of Christ and other holy figures.[26] Yet "Babylon" also appears in Byzantine sources as a synonym for the contemporary Islamic cities of Baghdad and al-Fustat/Cairo.[27] In this way, the *Vita* may intend to imply that Constantine V's iconoclast principles not only were heretical but possessed an Islamicizing character as well.[28]

Although it is impossible to know for certain if these monumental programs followed more naturalistic Roman-Byzantine models or more stylized Sasanian-Islamic exemplars, some silks of this era show Sasanian-Islamicizing features (see Figs. 9 and 12–13), raising the possibility that the programs installed under Constantine V likewise employed a foreign style. Aesthetic affiliations between Iconoclast and Islamic objects and monuments might have been construed to support the notion that Constantine V had "Babylonian" inclinations. Yet arguments for Constantine V's actual Islamic sympathies must be dispelled as Iconophile propaganda. He undertook active military endeavors on multiple borders, including campaigns against Muslim forces in 746 and 752.[29] He is credited by modern scholars with stemming the advance of Islamic armies into Byzantine territories and establishing a period of increased stability and prosperity following the relative insecurity of the late seventh and early eighth centuries, accomplishments that Iconophile commentators rarely acknowledge. Yet Constantine V did not attempt Byzantine expansions into Arab territory; his military efforts against Muslim adversaries remained defensive in nature.

Among the secular textiles ascribed a ninth-century date, hippodrome charioteers and hunters constitute prominent themes that possess imperial associations.[30] Unlike the hunter silks, however, the charioteer silks never incorporate Sasanian-Islamic elements, drawing instead from an exclusively Roman-Byzantine visual tradition.[31] The lack of foreign stylistic and iconographic features in the charioteer textiles supports the argument that the Sasanian-Islamicizing features in some Byzantine hunter silks indicate the selective emulation of foreign models as well as an understanding of exotic elements as particularly appropriate for depictions of the hunt. An early ninth-century Byzantine silk depicts an imperial figure driving a quadriga (Fig. 7), which recalls the reference in St. Stephen's *Vita* to similar themes in the Iconoclast decorative program at the Church of the Theotokos.[32] The motif evokes the public image of the emperor as the authoritative presence at the hippodrome, the major entertainment venue for the populace and the location of imperial triumphs and acclamations. The hippodrome and its representations perpetuate a Roman tradition of popular entertainments and imperial patronage that was prevalent in Roman-Byzantine art.[33] Several additional charioteer silks are preserved, although no others depict an explicitly imperial figure.[34] All the charioteer silks are dated to around 800. As a group, they express imperial prowess either directly, by depicting an imperial figure at the reins, or indirectly, by implying that all victories achieved in the hippodrome ultimately glorify the emperor.[35]

Like the charioteer silks, the hunter silks show variations in iconography, including both expressly imperial figures as well as nonimperial hunters.[36] Among the latter, three fragments from a single textile show hunters on foot pursuing large felines with bows and arrows (Fig. 8).[37] Another nonimperial





7. Fragment of textile depicting an imperial charioteer, Byzantine, 700–900, silk cloth with compound weave, h. 25 cm, w. 10 cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, acc. no. 762–1893. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

fragment shows mounted hunters shooting arrows at lions.[38] Both textiles date to around 800. Finally, a textile dated to the eighth to ninth century shows two mounted hunters spearing lions.[39] As already noted, images of the hunt in Byzantine art are often correlated to the visual and ideological traditions of earlier Roman-Byzantine art, and some Iconoclast-era textiles show evidence of this connection. For instance, the hunters in the three silks noted above wear short tunics that are typical of costumes depicted in Roman-Byzantine representations in other media, especially mosaics (see Figs. 26 and 27).[40]



8. Fragment of a textile showing archers and tigers, Byzantine, eighth or ninth century, silk, ca. 28 by 6.5, 17 by 6.5, and 6 by 6 cm, Keir Collection, London.

Yet among Iconoclast-era hunter silks, a number show details that depart from Roman-Byzantine types and resonate instead with Sasanian-Islamic models. Early to mid-twentieth-century scholars often emphasize Sasanian works of art as the likely objects of Byzantine emulation and sometimes cite the period of Sasanian-Byzantine military confrontation in Syria during the sixth and seventh centuries as the time at which these intercultural

transferences would have taken place.[41] There is no doubt that interactions during this period – including the import of war booty following the raiding of the palaces of the Sasanian king Khusrau II (r. 590–628) during the conquest of his capital, Ctesiphon, in 627 – ushered works of Sasanian art and even Sasanian craftsmen into Byzantine territories.[42] But the number and types of objects confiscated by Byzantine armies are unknown. Indeed, accounts of the sacking of the Sasanian capital report that many silks from the royal coffers were destroyed because they were too heavy to transport to Constantinople as spoils.[43] In any case, the argument that artistic influxes of the seventh century would have been the driving force behind artistic emulation one to two hundred years later is problematic on purely chronological grounds; the gap in time raises doubt about direct connections between Sasanian and middle Byzantine works of art.

Furthermore, the Sasanians were conquered by the Islamic Umayyad dynasty in the mid- to late seventh century and were no longer an autonomous culture by the eighth century. Sasanian artistic traditions were preserved, however, by the Umayyads and subsequently the Abbasids. Both dynasties self-consciously oriented the Islamic imperial image and ideology toward earlier imperial art, including that of both the Sasanian and Roman-Byzantine traditions.[44] For these reasons, visual parallels between eighth- and ninth-century Byzantine textiles and Sasanian works of art may instead evince Byzantine emulation of Abbasid objects and monuments that had assimilated stylistic and iconographic features from Sasanian and Umayyad works of art. In other words, ninth-century works of Byzantine art were more likely shaped by contemporaneous exposure to Islamic art that had in turn appropriated Sasanian models and by the particular political and cultural dynamics that gave these forms meaning in the ninth century than by the persistence of Sasanian artistic forms within Byzantium.

Specific details in the Byzantine hunter silks can be traced to features of Sasanian and Sasanian-Islamic models. At least eight textile fragments depict the Sasanian-Islamicizing motif of riders wearing distinctive cone-shaped helmets adorned with ribbons (Fig. 9).[45] Also characteristic of Sasanian models are the ribbons that trail from the heads of the riders. Ornaments such as these are found throughout Sasanian works of art attached to the king himself, his mount, and other animals associated with royal power. Known as *pativs*, these streamers symbolized the radiant quality of the ruler's divine glory, his *xwarrah* (*khvarnah*) (Fig. 10).[46] In addition, the hunters turn backward in their saddles to shoot arrows at their quarry, a pose known as the "Parthian Shot." The Parthian dynasty was the immediate forerunner to the Sasanians, and this pose was adopted by the Sasanians, who employed it frequently in royal imagery, particularly in metalwork depicting the royal hunt.[47] Finally, the stylized, emphatically centralized trees that separate the mounted figures depicted



9. Fragment of a textile showing hunters, Byzantine, 800–50, silk, Treasury of St. Kubinert, Cologne, Germany.

in the silks recall similar motifs in medieval Sasanian-Islamic works of art, including metalwork and stucco (Fig. 11). Dating to the first half of the ninth century, these textiles are among the latest of the Iconoclast-era silks.

Yet the Byzantine hunter silks do not simply copy foreign models; rather, they combine Sasanian-Islamicizing elements with distinctly Byzantine features. A silk attributed to the mid-eighth century and associated with Constantine V is preserved in a single fragment and depicts two mounted figures in imperial costume spearing a lion (Fig. 12).[48] The garments show close observation of the details of Byzantine imperial regalia, unequivocally identifying the figure as royal. At the same time, other features of the design incorporate details of Sasanian-Islamic origin. The lions are adorned with geometric motifs – particularly teardrop forms on their haunches and front legs – that recall



10. Plate showing a king hunting lions, Sasanian, third to early fourth centuries, gilded silver, from Sari, Iran, diam. 28.8 cm, h. 5.5 cm, wt. 1302 g, Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran, acc. no. 1275.

similar devices in depictions of animals in medieval Islamic art.[49] In addition, the tree positioned at the axis of the composition is ornamented at the lower part of the trunk with winglike elaborations that recall similar decorations of Sasanian origin in the Umayyad mosaic program of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, which dates to around 691.[50] Finally, the horses' tails are adorned with ribbons, which recall the *pativs* of Sasanian-Islamic models.[51] Another imperial textile dated to the eighth or ninth century shows figures wearing crowns and short, generously adorned royal tunics of clearly Byzantine origin, but again combines these features with potentially Sasanian-Islamicizing elements including the stylized trees at the center of the compositions (Fig. 13).[52] Furthermore, the figures slay lions and leopards, and these animals show geometric decorative features on their bodies that recall the embellished animal forms of medieval Islamic art. It is doubtful that either of these textiles was intended to portray a specific emperor or imperial pair. Rather, they represent a concept of imperial authority that projected a secular notion of royal power through the demonstration of physical strength, practical skill, and cunning.



11. Pilaster relief from the exterior façade of the large *ayvan* of Khusrau II at Taq-e Bostan, early seventh century, Iran. Photo courtesy of Matthew P. Canepa.

Sasanian-Islamic elements in textiles depicting imperial figures may have functioned as purely aesthetic embellishments for some viewers. Yet the Byzantine imperial visual vocabulary was a highly regulated and formulaic system that was integral to the projection of royal power. Presumably any departure from its conventions would have required that the resulting images maintained at least the essential idea of heroic prowess in order that those



12. Fragment of a textile showing imperial hunters, Byzantine, silk, eighth century, Musée des Tissus de Lyons, MT 27386. Photo: Sylvan Pretto.

viewers who were sensitive to these representations as meaningful statements of imperial status could reconcile them with their expectations. If approached from this perspective, foreign artistic emulation can be appreciated as an expression of new notions of intercultural imperial competition that emerged in response to the growing power and prestige of Islamic culture, particularly under the Abbasids.

The adoption of these non-Byzantine models would have been facilitated by the common meaning that the hunt held in both the Byzantine and Islamic traditions, which in turn was inherited from preceding antique cultures. Following Greco-Roman precedents, the Byzantine imperial tradition promoted the hunt as a metaphor for military triumph.[53] Similarly within Near Eastern royal ideology, the hunt carried a parallel meaning: The defeat of wild beasts was a literal expression of the king's strength and bravery as well



13. Hunters pursuing a lion, Byzantine, eighth to ninth centuries, silk, 42.2 by 34.7 cm, Museo Sacro, Vatican City, cat. no. T 118 (1250). Photo credit: Scala / Art Resource, NY.

as a metaphoric reference to his defeat of enemies in battle.[54] This message is evident in the multitude of Sasanian silver vessels that depict the king pursuing diverse beasts, including a plate that makes emphatically clear the role of the hunt as a symbol of royal prowess. In the top register, the king stands enthroned among his courtiers, while in the bottom register, he pursues his quarry (Fig. 14).[55] This concept of rulership – and the role of the hunt within it – was appropriated by later Islamic groups, especially the Abbasids, who imitated Sasanian silver objects to express their continuity with this tradition



14. Plate showing enthronement and hunting scenes, Sasanian, sixth to seventh centuries, gilded silver, diam. 26.1 cm, h. 5.1 cm, wt. 985.6 g, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, inv. no. S-250. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Vladimir Terebenin, Leonard Kheifets, Yuri Molokovets.

(Fig. 15).[56] In Iconoclast-era silks, the hunt was likely intended to convey a similar meaning of triumph over adversaries.

This message would have served effectively at the Byzantine court, where textiles decorated with exoticizing images of the Byzantine emperor could have been fabricated to serve as garments or incorporated into furnishings and architectural decorations, projecting an image of the ruler's cosmopolitan power to his most esteemed subjects. Yet silks, including those depicting hunters, were also given as diplomatic gifts, in which case their messages of Byzantine supremacy were intended for an audience beyond the imperial court. Indeed, one of the silks discussed above may have been presented to the Frankish king Pepin by the Byzantine emperor Constantine V (see Fig. 12).[57]



15. Plate depicting a lion hunter, post-Sasanian, seventh to eighth centuries, silver, diam. 27.8 cm, h. 3.5 cm, wt. 1265.5 g, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, inv. no. S-247. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Vladimir Terebenin, Leonard Kheifets, Yuri Molokovets.

Within the context of diplomatic negotiations, objects incorporating foreign iconographic and stylistic languages could have served to convey the strength of the Byzantine ruler and his ability to conquer his enemies in the same way that he mastered their artistic forms.

Viewed from this perspective, the eighth- to ninth-century hunter silks bespeak a willingness to cast Byzantine power in an intercultural visual vocabulary that assimilated foreign elements as a strategy for conveying the military and cultural superiority of the emperor. By controlling an iconography of the hunt that combined features from foreign artistic traditions with a Byzantine visual vocabulary, the silks metaphorically convey the ruler's ability to conquer his enemies and absorb their power, while remaining true to his own origins. In these images, emulation is not a sign of weakness, but a gesture of rivalry and conquest.

As noted above, the chronology of Byzantine textiles is notoriously problematic, and no single methodology for dating can be effectively applied to all works in this medium. Through the combined analysis of textual evidence, weaving technique, iconography, and style, textiles decorated with secular themes are typically placed in the middle of the eighth century to the first half of the ninth century.[58] Yet textual evidence raises the possibility that a surge in the production of textiles depicting hunters and animals might be attributed to the mid-ninth century. One of the most important primary sources for Iconoclast-era textiles is the *Liber Pontificalis*, a history of the Roman popes that provides, among other information, records of their donations to the papal treasury.[59] Textiles feature prominently in these lists. Entries were recorded over a long period of time by various hands, resulting in inconsistencies of terminology and detail of description. Still the documents remain useful because they preserve a rare account of the number and general types of textiles once abundantly present in the medieval papal treasuries.

The majority of Byzantine silks mentioned in the *Liber Pontificalis* appear in donation lists dating between 798 and 814.[60] Yet a distinct peak in the percentage of textiles decorated with secular motifs (especially animals and plants) is noticeable during the reign of Pope Gregory IV (828–44): Of the approximately seventy textile donations recorded during his tenure, about twenty (ca. 29 percent) are indicated as secular in theme, displaying motifs of trees, animals, and possibly hunters. Only five textiles (ca. 7 percent) show religious figural motifs.[61] Some of Gregory's predecessors also donated large numbers of textiles. In these instances, however, secular themes constitute a relatively small proportion of the overall gifts. Leo III (795–816) dedicated silks numbering over 700, but only about thirty-six textiles (ca. 5 percent) showed secular motifs, while over 300 (ca. 43 percent) are specified as decorated with crosses.[62] Similarly, under Hadrian I (772–95), out of around a thousand donated silks, not a single one is noted to have displayed secular imagery.[63] Within the *Liber Pontificalis*, a proportional upsurge in secular figural silks is found in the reign of Gregory IV.

Of course multiple factors may have contributed to this phenomenon. Those responsible for recording donations from Hadrian I and Leo III may simply have been less interested in secular iconographic distinctions and therefore failed to describe the objects fully. Furthermore, the date of a given donation in the *Liber Pontificalis* does not necessarily indicate the period of production for the objects noted because the textiles themselves may have been in papal possession for a length of time before their dedication to the treasury or may have been kept in Byzantine imperial storehouses before being gifted to the West. Still the possibility that textiles depicting secular themes like the hunt were produced and disseminated in large numbers during the 820s to 840s merits consideration and, if true, associates such silks with the reign of

Theophilos I (r. 829–42), an emperor who struggled against Abbasid armies, much as Constantine V had in the eighth century, and deployed Islamic models in his own artistic commissions. It is during the reign of Theophilos that a systematic emulation of Islamic models first emerges, most likely in response to shifts in power dynamics between the Abbasid and Byzantine worlds.

CONTACT AND CONFLICT: BYZANTIUM AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE NINTH CENTURY

A variety of activities during the reign of Theophilos allowed for contact between Islamic and Byzantine societies, especially among elite members of the court. As a result, the environment of the court may have been particularly receptive to the cosmopolitan image of imperial power projected by exoticizing works of art like the silk textiles discussed above. Theophilos engaged in important military expeditions against Abbasid forces that resulted in both victories and defeats for the Byzantines. Although trounced by the caliph al-Ma'mun (r. 813–33) in 831, Theophilos launched a more successful campaign in 837, sacking the Abbasid city of Zapetra during the reign of al-Ma'mun's half brother and successor, al-Mu'tasim (r. 833–42).[64] Theophilos proudly celebrated this victory in an elaborate triumphal ceremony at Constantinople probably in 837, during which he paraded prisoners and spoils from the battle in public procession.[65] Unfortunately for Theophilos, this victory prompted a harsh response from al-Mu'tasim, who conquered and destroyed Amorion, an important Byzantine city and the ancestral home of Theophilos's dynasty, in 838.[66]

Byzantine defeat at Amorion prompted Theophilos to seek aid against the Abbasids from medieval rulers of Europe, including the Spanish Umayyad emir, Abd al-Rahman II (r. 822–52). In 839 Theophilos sent an envoy to the capital at Cordoba (in modern-day Spain), urging the Umayyads to wage war against the Abbasids in order to regain the dynastic claim they had lost in 750 and promising Byzantine support for the suggested endeavor. Although Abd al-Rahman expressed gratitude for the generous gifts that the Byzantine delegation delivered (and the author notes that the Umayyad emissaries reciprocated with presents for Theophilos), he made clear that he had neither the resources nor the inclination to accept Theophilos's proposition. Theophilos's embassy may have been launched under ill-founded expectations. His requests included the recall of Andalusian sea raiders who had pillaged Byzantine Crete, but these pirates were renegades and not under the command of the Umayyad caliph, who at this time controlled no military fleet.[67] Still Theophilos's overture makes clear Byzantine flexibility in negotiating with Islamic powers. Byzantine attitudes toward Islamic polities could be shaped by practicality as much as, if not more than, ideology; the enemy of the Abbasids was a potential friend of the Byzantines, regardless of religious affiliation.

Despite military confrontations between Byzantium and the Abbasid Empire, commercial interactions among their merchants and markets took root in the ninth century. Goods and people traveling from one community to the other broadened possibilities for artistic exposure, even beyond the privileged sphere of the imperial courts.[68] The importance of these connections is indicated by the eventual provisions in Constantinople for a special guild that dealt solely in imports from Baghdad and "Syria" (i.e., the Abbasid Empire) and was required to cooperate with "Syrian merchants who have been domiciled in this city [Constantinople] for at least ten years."[69] Although first attested in the early tenth-century code for commercial regulations, the *Book of the Eparch*, the system described in this document is well developed, suggesting that these trade connections were established at an earlier date.[70] Evidence for the possibility of Byzantine-Abbasid trade is found in a letter written by Theophilos to the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun in 832 (immediately following the Byzantines' defeat in 831). The emperor offers favorable trade conditions to the Abbasids in exchange for a promise of peace and the transfer of war prisoners, terms that al-Ma'mun declined.[71] Nonetheless, the proposal suggests well-controlled and presumably profitable economic connections between the two polities.

Another cultural sphere in which the Amorians and Abbasids vied for supremacy was on the intellectual front. In the early ninth century, al-Ma'mun intensified efforts initiated by his caliphal forerunners, especially al-Mansur (r. 754–75) and al-Mahdi (r. 775–85), to copy a wide range of antique scientific and philosophical texts at his court. Dimitri Gutas interprets this endeavor as an integral aspect of Abbasid imperial ambitions, which required establishing their equality with the great societies of the past – including the Sasanians, Romans, and ancient Greeks.[72] Within this configuration of cultures, the Abbasids saw the Byzantines as unworthy rivals and consistently derided their adversaries as undeserving of the antique intellectual heritage. In the words of the ninth-century Abbasid scholar Abu Uthman al-Gahiz (781–ca. 868), "the Christians and the Rum [Romans, i.e., Byzantines] have neither science, nor expository literature, nor vision, and their names should be erased from the registers of the philosophers and the sages."[73] By positioning themselves as the true heirs to the intellectual legacies of Greek, Roman, and Sasanian erudition, the Abbasids sought to express their legitimacy as inheritors in political terms as well.

At the same time, Muslim authors acknowledge Byzantine success in specific scholarly and cultural domains, sometimes belying their own statements regarding Byzantine inferiority. Al-Jahiz, for example, celebrates the Byzantines' skills as craftsmen and recognizes their familiarity with cultural and intellectual traditions valued in Islamic culture, including astrology, calligraphy, and arithmetic.[74] From these inconsistent commentaries and ambivalent attitudes, there emerges a clear preoccupation among Abbasid scholars regarding their

status vis-à-vis the Byzantines in the domain of scholarly knowledge and a palpable desire to stake a claim for their greater legitimacy as the true heirs to the legacy of antique knowledge.

This competition is also attested by tenth-century Byzantine historical accounts that refer to Abbasid efforts to initiate a "brain drain" of Byzantine scholars, a goal that was ultimately unsuccessful. The most famous of these stories involved Leo the Mathematician (d. ca. 869), who was purportedly invited by the Abbasid caliph to serve as a court scholar in Baghdad. Upon learning of the invitation, Theophilos is claimed to have created a similar post for Leo in Constantinople, thereby neutralizing any temptation for Leo to defect to the Abbasid court. According to the account in the tenth-century pro-iconophile chronicle of Theophanes *continuatus*, the caliph later requested that Theophilos send Leo to Baghdad as a diplomatic gesture, yet Theophilos refused, explaining that Leo was too precious a cultural treasure to be released.[75] The historical accuracy of this incident has been questioned because the two sources that report it – Theophanes *continuatus* and the mid-tenth-century Logothete chronicle – differ in some details.[76] Furthermore, the progenitor of Arabic algebra, Muhammad al-Khwarizmi, was already a resident scholar at al-Ma'mun's court, raising skepticism that the Abbasid caliph would have recognized superior intellectual value in Leo.[77] Yet even as tenth-century exaggerations (or fabrications), these stories are relevant to an understanding of Byzantine self-perception and self-promotion vis-à-vis the Islamic world. In each source, the attitude toward the Abbasids is consistent, positioning Byzantium as the victor in a battle over stature and resources. By requesting that Leo be sent, the caliph revealed the relative lack of comparable scholars at the Abbasid court, and by refusing to comply, Theophilos retained the advantage that Leo embodied.[78]

Although Leo never did travel to the Abbasid court, between 829 and 907, four other "Byzantine intellectuals" were sent on separate delegations to Baghdad. Paul Magdalino has identified the common denominator among these emissaries to be their secular erudition.[79] Indeed, one of the delegates, St. Constantine/Cyril, who traveled to the Abbasid court around 880, is reported in his *vita* to have outstripped the Muslim scholars he encountered in all matters of secular learning and even proved his worth in matters of Islamic wisdom by quoting from the Qur'an.[80] Delegates sent to the Abbasid court may have been selected for both their diplomatic skills and their wide-ranging knowledge.[81] Given the Abbasids' scholarly ambitions, the ability to hold one's own under intellectual scrutiny was a reasonable criterion for Byzantine representatives. As concerns cross-cultural exchange, these select high-ranking diplomats experienced the wealth and grandeur of one another's courts and served as potential conduits for the transference of cultural models, whether through the importation of actual works of art, often as diplomatic gifts, or through

recounting their memories of the opulent spaces and luxurious objects they encountered during their journeys.

Of course diplomatic exchanges were not undertaken with the sole purpose of flaunting intellectual prowess and cultural superiority. One of the main impetuses behind these contacts was to make arrangements for war treaties and the exchange of prisoners, who sometimes numbered in the thousands following particularly active periods of military conflict. The first such ransom meeting was held in 756 during the reigns of Constantine V and al-Mansur; between 805 and 946, at least twelve additional prisoner exchanges took place. Former captives became valuable assets after their return because their knowledge of the enemy could serve the planning of future diplomatic and military engagements.[82]

The way in which diplomatic interactions set in motion cultural rivalry is clearly apparent in the well-known account of the embassy carried out by John the Grammarian, a Byzantine courtier and primary adviser to Theophilos, who had been the emperor's childhood tutor. John was sent to the Abbasid court around 832, possibly to announce Theophilos's recent ascension to the throne and certainly to make the appropriate impression of the emperor's power and legitimacy. John's ulterior motive may have been to entice back to Byzantium a high-ranking courtier, Manuel the Armenian, former general of Asia Minor, who had defected to the Abbasids after being accused of treachery by another member of Theophilos's retinue. Manuel returned in 830, following John's visit.[83] As a political defector, Manuel represents yet another category of individuals who moved between Byzantine and Islamic realms, allowing for the development of cross-cultural knowledge as well as the transference of cultural and artistic traditions.

Accounts of John's embassy discuss at length the extravagant gifts that he distributed at the Abbasid court in order to display the greatness of his emperor. Precious-metal pots filled with coins and enormous golden vessels in multiple copies were just a few of the luxury objects presented in a conspicuous fashion to glorify Theophilos and his empire.[84] These valuable gifts – and John's feigned attitude of their insignificance – represented a challenge that could not go unanswered. In return for a gift sent to al-Ma'mun by the Byzantine emperor, presumably Theophilos, the caliph reciprocated with objects and materials that would surpass those he had received, instructing his vizier to "send him [the Byzantine emperor] a gift a hundred times greater than his, so that he realizes the glory of Islam and the grace that Allah bestowed on us through it."[85] After this elaborate gift was prepared, al-Ma'mun purportedly inquired as to what the Byzantines valued most, and, learning of their desire for musk and sable, he ordered that two hundred *artal* (ca. 8 kg) of musk and 200 sable pelts be added. Although the account may be an elaboration on historical events, it nonetheless reflects an attitude in keeping with the reality of

Byzantine-Islamic interactions. By exceeding the Byzantines' wildest desires, the Abbasid caliph presumably aimed to convey the limitlessness of his wealth and, thereby, his economic and cultural superiority. In so doing he demonstrated the Abbasid ability to compete with and even defeat the Byzantines in a culture war, just as Abbasid armies would on the actual battlefield.

Byzantine desire to rival the pomp and luxury of the Abbasid court is especially evident in the artistic impact of John's embassy to Baghdad at the Byzantine court. As mentioned in the Introduction, upon his return to Constantinople, John convinced Theophilos to undertake the construction of a replica of an Abbasid palace, which purportedly copied the original in all respects except that it incorporated Christian churches into the complex.[86] The result of this endeavor, the Bryas Palace, is no longer preserved; even the location of the building has yet to be identified conclusively.[87] Still it is described in a well-known passage of the account of Theophanes *continuatus* for the year 830:

> Having come back to Theophilus and described to him the things [he had seen] in Syria [i.e., the Abbasid Empire], he [John] persuaded him to build the palace of Bryas in imitation of Arab [palaces] and in no way differing from the latter either in form or decoration. The work was carried out according to John's instructions by a man named Patrikes who happened to be also adorned with the rank of patrician. The only departure he made [from the Arab model] was that he built next to the bedchamber a church of Our most-holy Lady, the Mother of God, and in the courtyard of the same palace a triconch church of great beauty and exceptional size, the middle part of which was dedicated to the Archangel [Michael], while the lateral parts were dedicated to women martyrs.[88]

The Abbasid caliphs constructed numerous residences in and around Baghdad during the eighth and ninth centuries. It is unknown which palace John visited, although Hussein Keshani offers persuasive evidence for identifying the destination as al-Rusafa, which was constructed on the eastern side of the Tigris, across from and to the north of Baghdad, by al-Mahdi (al-Ma'mun's grandfather) in 775–85.[89] None of the Abbasid palaces built in and around Baghdad is well preserved today, but watercolors documenting the decoration of excavated structures at the caliphal residence in Samarra offer insight into the kinds of motifs with which the Bryas palace might have been adorned, including entertainers and animals.[90] Although the author does not provide further details regarding the Bryas complex and its decoration, the account makes clear that John imported to Constantinople the form and embellishments of Abbasid palaces.

As a single monument preserved only in the textual record, the Bryas may seem meager evidence for a broader argument promoting the importance of Islamic emulation within the ninth-century imperial sphere. The building

must, however, be considered in light of the fact that the Byzantines rarely acknowledged the artistic accomplishments or material splendor of rival cultures.[91] Byzantine recognition of a contemporary society's success in the domain of art and architecture is unusual, and therefore this instance of emulation is more significant than it might at first appear.

Through their grandeur and opulence, palaces marked dominion over surrounding territory and impressed the viewer with the wealth and power of the owner and his (or her) realm. Palaces also served as important backdrops for state ceremonial. In both the Byzantine and Islamic worlds, reception rooms functioned as frames for the appearance of the emperor or the caliph, and these spaces were carefully designed and manipulated to maximize the majesty of the sovereign. In these ways the palace was an integral aspect of the ruler's image.[92] As such Theophilos's emulation of an Islamic model provides an important statement regarding Byzantine strategies for conveying imperial power and authority through the visual language of a cultural "other."

The incorporation of Abbasid elements into a building intended to express Byzantine imperial identity and power might at first appear to undermine the authority of the emperor, but Byzantine artistic emulation of an Abbasid model should not be seen as evidence of cultural poverty or political weakness.[93] Rather, Theophilos's ability to imitate his enemies is best understood as a kind of symbolic conquest. By equaling his adversaries' achievements in the artistic realm, he metaphorically expressed his ability to accomplish the same feat in the political and martial domains. In fact, the Bryas eventually played this role in more literal terms, serving as the departure point for the triumphal ceremony Theophilos celebrated at Constantinople following his victory over the Abbasids in 837, during which objects and people captured during his campaign were publicly displayed as a testament to Byzantine dominance over their enemy.[94] A similar exhibition had taken place at the hippodrome during an earlier triumph, possibly in 831 following Theophilos's success against an Arab Cilician force.[95] Among the highlights of the celebration, an Arab captive rode a horse while wielding two spears, a display that demonstrated his remarkable skill. Much to the approval of the Byzantine audience, he was subsequently unseated in a competition with a Byzantine rider.[96] With this in mind, we can appreciate how the artistic conquest expressed through the construction of the Bryas following John's return from his embassy to Baghdad – and the incorporation of Sasanian-Islamic motifs in Byzantine imperial silks – was part of a multifaceted image of imperial success also demonstrated through the defeat of Arab forces and the performance of Byzantine triumphal ceremonies.

Emissaries from Muslim rulers were received in Constantinople, where every effort was made to astound and intimidate them through the grandeur of court ceremonial and the opulence of palace surroundings. The Umayyad poet and emissary of the caliph Abd al-Rahman II, Yahya ibn al-Hakam al-Ghazal,

came to Constantinople around 840 during the reign of Theophilos and is reported to have greatly impressed both the emperor and empress, Theodora, with his wit and poetic skills.[97] Yet competition was still at play in the delicate negotiation of court protocol. When al-Ghazal refused to perform *proskynesis* (prostration) before the Byzantine emperor, the Byzantines purportedly constricted the opening in the doorway through which al-Ghazal accessed the reception room, thereby forcing him to bend as he entered the emperor's presence.[98] According to Islamic sources, al-Ghazal outmaneuvered the Byzantines by sitting down with his back to the door and sliding along the floor, so that he entered the room without paying the desired homage.[99] Theophilos also kept at court high-ranking Abbasid prisoners captured during military expeditions. The most illustrious of these individuals were housed in the palace and treated more like guests of the emperor than enemy combatants.[100] Byzantine and Islamic delegates, defectors, and prisoners provided conduits through which artistic and architectural models could be transmitted, whether by means of the memories of the lavish ceremonies and monuments they experienced during their sojourns in foreign courts or through actual objects they had acquired as gifts or goods during their journeys abroad.

It is also possible that Islamicizing objects and monuments produced in Byzantium were intended to impress non-Byzantine visitors and residents. In the case of the Bryas palace, Keshani argues that this monument may have factored into Theophilos's efforts to gain the support of groups who had revolted against the Abbasids. An important bolster to Theophilos's military successes was an alliance with the Persian Khurramites, a non-Muslim group persecuted by the Abbasids, who sought refuge with Theophilos and swelled the Byzantine army ranks with as many as fourteen thousand new conscripts after their expulsion from Abbasid territories in the early 830s. A second wave of Khurramite refugees followed in 837. As Keshani suggests, Theophilos may have sought to express his superiority over the Abbasid caliph by showing his ability to control that ruler's visual language of power so as to communicate effectively with the Byzantines' newest allies, the Khurramites.[101] At the same time, however, the value of this message to a domestic audience should not be underestimated. Byzantine courtiers also benefited from the demonstration of their emperor's power and prestige rivaling that of the Abbasid enemies.

The stories of Byzantine-Islamic diplomatic exchanges are no doubt filled with some degree of exaggeration, and the historicity of individual accounts can be debated. But for the present discussion, their absolute accuracy is less important than the larger attitudes that the sources reflect. By the ninth century, the Byzantines and Abbasids recognized each other as rivals on a multitude of fronts: military, intellectual, commercial, and artistic. Even the more amicable relations between Byzantium and the Umayyads of Spain were marked by efforts to jockey for power, if only on the symbolic level of court ceremonial.

Given the challenge the Abbasids posed to Byzantine hegemony in military, political, and economic terms, it is not surprising that the emperor would recognize the need to confront, emulate, and ultimately surpass his Muslim rivals in the articulation of his own image, whether on the monumental scale of a palace or the portable scale of a silk weaving.

Textiles that depict imperial figures in conjunction with stylistic and iconographic elements that recall Sasanian-Islamic models must be considered in light of the broader evidence for active Byzantine-Abbasid rivalry in other domains of eighth- to ninth-century society. Much as the Bryas palace demonstrated a Byzantine ability to master the terms of Abbasid architectural display and deploy exotic artistic forms to benefit the glory of the emperor, silks adopted a visual vocabulary of Sasanian-Islamic wealth, power, and prestige in order to claim in symbolic terms that the greatness of the Byzantine emperor matched that of contemporary rivals, especially the Abbasid caliph. The Islamicizing palace, the Bryas, attests to Theophilos's emulation of exotic artistic models, and the *Liber pontificalis* provides evidence that silks depicting the hunt – and possibly incorporating Sasanian-Islamic features – may have been particularly popular in the period of his rule. Theophilos was not the only Iconoclast emperor under whose reign Islamic models were emulated, but his era witnessed a concentration of these attitudes and practices.

This is not to say that Theophilos's aesthetic predilections reflect subservience to foreign cultures. Indeed, during his triumph of 837 marking the defeat of Abbasid armies, when he processed to Constantinople from the Islamicizing Bryas palace, war spoils were displayed along with Muslim prisoners; both objects and people wrested from enemy control were statements of Byzantine supremacy, especially that of the emperor.[102] The incorporation of exotic and exoticizing art and architecture during Theophilos's reign emphasizes that the artistic achievements of one's adversary might be emulated and enjoyed, even in the midst – or perhaps as a parallel to – one's real or desired triumph over them.

The cross-cultural connections established between Byzantium and various Islamic polities in the eighth and ninth centuries laid the foundation for a continuing dialogue with cultural others in later imperial imagery. Despite theological differences between iconoclast and iconophile rulers, certain domains of imperial representation – especially those connected with secular themes of military might and its metaphoric representation in the hunt – continued to be promoted under orthodox emperors in the decades immediately following the end of Iconoclasm. Indeed, dynastic connections between the iconoclast Amorians and the subsequent iconophile emperors demanded that continuity be maintained, especially between Theophilos and his successor and son, Michael III.

CHAPTER TWO

APPROPRIATION

Stylistic Juxtaposition and the Expression of Power

IMPERIAL ART OF THE ICONOCLAST ERA DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER 1 demonstrates Byzantine openness to foreign artistic models – particularly from the Islamic world – in the eighth and ninth centuries. During the subsequent rule of the Macedonian dynasty (867–1056), iconoclasm was rejected, and the veneration of icons and the patronage of Christian figural art increasingly defined Christian orthodoxy.[1] As already noted in Chapter 1, certain post-Iconoclast Byzantine authors interpreted the Iconoclast emperors' rejection of religious imagery to be evidence of their "Saracen-mindedness." The association of exoticizing art with unorthodox beliefs has led to a tacit assumption that foreign elements played a less prominent role in art of the post-Iconoclast era. Yet clear connections existed between the Amorian (iconoclast) and Macedonian (iconophile) dynasties, both in the imperial imagery and ideology they endorsed as well as in the continued use of exotic iconographic and stylistic models. The circulation of exotic objects in the markets of Constantinople and the presence of foreigners at the court as both diplomats and prisoners ensured that the palace and its community of courtiers remained current with fashions and traditions beyond the borders of Byzantium.[2] Their enthusiasm for foreign goods is indicated by a special provision in the early tenth-century commercial law code, *The Book of the Eparch*, that guaranteed members of the court privileged access for purchasing so-called *Baghdadikia*, that is, goods imported from the Abbasid Empire.[3]

Yet exotic models reached the Byzantine court from even farther afield. The middle Byzantine ivory box known as the Troyes Casket (discussed in the Introduction) combines distinctly Byzantine scenes of imperial triumph and the hunt with an almost identical pair of birds that unquestionably derive from a medieval Chinese model (see Fig. 30). Furthermore, the Troyes Casket shows close affiliation with Roman-Byzantine and Iconoclast themes of military triumph and eschews the expected Macedonian-era imperial iconography of divine endorsement. Although conventional readings of the Macedonian dynasty foreground its Orthodox identity and assume a discontinuity with Iconoclast era artistic traditions, the Troyes Casket attests to confluence of the imperial imagery and ideology of the Amorian and Macedonian dynasties. Acceptance of Iconoclast models was motivated by an abiding preoccupation of Macedonian self-fashioning: The need for precedents that legitimized current imperial identity and practice.[4] In what follows, I first provide a summary of the changes in imperial iconography from the Iconoclast to Iconophile eras and a historical overview of the transition from the Amorian to Macedonian dynasties, explaining the reasons for ideological continuity between these royal houses. I then turn to analysis of the Troyes Casket, assessing its diverse iconographic and stylistic sources and the way in which the hybrid features of the box created a coherent message. Finally, I address the suggestion that the box served as a diplomatic gift, supporting the possibility of this function while insisting on the simultaneous viability of the container's production for the Byzantine court. The Troyes Casket strategically employs emblems of cultural difference as a means of expressing universal dominion, a message that would have been entirely appropriate for Byzantine consumption.

THE ICONOCLAST IMAGE OF IMPERIAL AUTHORITY AND THE TRANSITION TO THE MACEDONIAN ERA

Although the iconoclast debates focused on religious imagery, aspects of imperial representation were also affected.[5] Before Iconoclasm, emperors employed iconography that communicated the divine endorsement of their rule by showing Christ blessing the *basileus* (see Fig. 6). In the Iconoclast era, representations of holy people, foremost Christ, were repressed in all artistic domains, including imperial imagery. Instead, emperors promoted the cross as a symbol of imperial triumph and divine favor.[6] This shift is perhaps best illustrated in the numismatic evidence. Pre-Iconoclast emperors, starting with Justinian II (r. 685–95 and 705–11), made use of the image of Christ on their coins (Fig. 16.a).[7] Such representations were rejected during Iconoclasm, when numismatic iconography was limited to imperial portraits and the triumphant cross (Fig. 16.b).[8] As would be expected, one of the earliest instances of the



16a. *Solidus* of Justinian II (r. 685–95 and 705–11), Constantinople, Byzantine, ca. 705, gold, wt. 4.38 g, American Numismatic Society, New York, 1977.158.1107. Courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

16b. *Solidus* of Leo III (r. 717–41), Constantinople, Byzantine, 717–20, gold, diam. 2.1 cm, wt. 4.47 g, American Numismatic Society, New York, 1968.131.223. Courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

16c. *Solidus* of Michael III (r. 842–67), Constantinople, Byzantine, 843–56, gold, diam. 2.1 cm, wt. 4.42 g, American Numismatic Society, New York, 1977.158.1149. Courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

depiction of Christ's portrait following the end of Iconoclasm in 843 was in coinage, as seen in *solidi* (gold coins) minted under Michael III (r. 842–67), at the beginning of whose reign Iconoclasm was officially ended (Fig. 16c).[9] Michael and his advisers further affirmed the reinstatement of Christ's image as an emblem of imperial authority by commissioning portraits of Christ and the Virgin Mary alongside his own in decorations on the wall of the imperial throne room in the Great Palace, the Chrysotriklinos.[10]

Despite the seemingly definitive break from Iconoclast forerunners apparent in imperial imagery produced under Michael III, iconographical and ideological connections between Iconoclast and post-Iconoclast emperors were not easily broken. During Michael's reign, affiliation with his father Theophilos (r. 829–42), the last of the Iconoclast emperors, was politically expedient, if not requisite, because Michael's position depended on the familial inheritance of imperial authority.[11] In part because of the necessity to preserve Amorian dynastic claims, an effort to rehabilitate Theophilos's reputation ensued immediately after his death. Apparently orchestrated by Theophilos's wife (and Michael's mother and co-regent), Theodora, the campaign staked a number of claims to promote Theophilos's positive image, including the apocryphal story that he had repudiated iconoclasm on his deathbed.[12]

Even during the early years of the Macedonian dynasty, the status of the Amorians required careful negotiation. The first Macedonian emperor, Basil I (r. 867–86), rose to power through the patronage of Michael III.[13] Basil's ascent exemplifies the potentials of Byzantine meritocracy and social upward

mobility at its best (and worst). A rural peasant who came to Constantinople to seek his fortune in the 850s, Basil eventually entered imperial service as a groom at the palace stables. Through charm and physical fortitude, he gained the support of increasingly more prestigious patrons, including ultimately the emperor himself. Michael and Basil's relationship was extremely close, and Michael promoted his favorite through a series of prominent court positions. They collaborated in the overthrow and murder of Michael's powerful uncle, Bardas, in 866, after which Michael appointed Basil co-emperor. Michael even arranged for Basil to wed Michael's own mistress, Eudokia Ingerine, in 865.[14] Yet Basil I's ambitions extended beyond serving the existing dynasty. In 867, fearing Michael's threats to appoint a new co-emperor, Basil orchestrated Michael's assassination and declared a new imperial house. Basil and his supporters went to great lengths to condemn the memory of his immediate forerunner in order to justify his murder and were successful in gaining pardon for Basil's sin and crime.[15] Nonetheless, Basil still needed to promote the legitimacy of his claim to the throne. How Basil achieved this is a continuing point of debate, but it is clear that he did not simply shun an Amorian connection.

One of the strategies Basil and his supporters employed was the continued promotion of Theophilos in tandem with the condemnation of his son, Michael III.[16] The treatment of Theophilos is largely favorable in the history of Theophanes *continuatus*, a mid-tenth-century compilation of sources reporting on events that took place from 813 to 961, which is thought to reflect and promote Macedonian political ideologies.[17] While the text denounces the earlier Iconoclast emperor Constantine V (r. 741–75) for his destruction of religious imagery and his patronage of secular decorative programs, descriptions of Theophilos's artistic renovations are more neutral in tone, crediting the emperor with significant architectural accomplishments, including the construction of the Bryas palace, discussed in Chapter 1.[18] Theophilos is presented as a conscientious and fair king, devoted to his subjects, his various sins – marital infidelity, abuse of holy men, and persecution of iconophiles – notwithstanding.[19] It was Theophilos's reputation as a dispenser of justice for all people that became his hallmark.[20] In this and other favorable sources, Theophilos is celebrated for imperial qualities of a secular nature: justice, the foundation of buildings, devotion to his people, and military prowess. Although some of these sympathetic texts can be dated to the rule of the Amorian dynasty under Theophilos's son and successor, Michael III, the bulk seem to have been produced during the late ninth and tenth centuries during the Macedonian era. Anthanasios Markopoulos proposes, albeit with caution, that the whitewashing of Theophilos' reputation during the tenth century under the Macedonians served to contrast and thereby heighten the unworthiness of his son, Michael, a position that ultimately promoted Basil by justifying his usurpation of the



17. Troyes Casket, Constantinople (?), Byzantine, tenth century, ivory, 13 by 26 by 13 cm, Cathedral Treasury, Troyes, France.

throne.[21] In this way, Basil might even be said to emerge as the true heir to Theophilos. The rehabilitation of Theophilos attests to Macedonian willingness to minimize or revise the unorthodox position of an Iconoclast forerunner in order to recuperate other aspects of his character that were judged admirable by and useful to the current dynasty.[22]

The historical and ideological imbrication of the late Amorian and early Macedonian dynasties is well documented in scholarly literature on Byzantine history. In the art-historical domain, however, the connection is not typically stressed, no doubt in part because works of art that depict religious imagery gradually reemerged in the decades following the end of Iconoclasm in 843 and clearly distinguish the Iconoclast from post-Iconoclast eras. Likewise discussion of Macedonian imperial art tends to focus on the gradual association of the emperor's image with holy figures.[23]

The well-known middle Byzantine ivory box in the cathedral treasury at Troyes, France, breaks with this larger pattern by presenting an imperial program that excludes holy figures as well as any prominent expression of the divine source of the emperor's authority (Fig. 17).[24] Instead it draws on foreign and non-Christian sources to create a program that recalls thematic aspects of the Iconoclast-era silks discussed in Chapter 1. Analysis of the object in

relation to early Macedonian textual and historical evidence reveals that it projects attitudes about foreign cultures and Iconoclast forerunners that resonate with imperial ideology and art of the Amorian royal house. The Troyes Casket continues a dynamic of emulation of foreign motifs and the cultures they represent, but it also appropriates exotic elements to serve a distinctly Macedonian message of universal rule and the hegemonic and expansionist principles that accompany this outlook.

The lid of the Troyes Casket shows two emperors receiving homage from the inhabitants of a walled city and follows the Roman-Byzantine iconography of imperial triumph (see Fig. 21). On the front panel, two mounted hunters attack a lion, and on the back panel, a single figure on foot spears a wild boar (see Figs. 24 and 25). The latter images recall royal hunters prevalent in Iconoclast-era textiles discussed in Chapter 1. In contrast to the lid and long panels, which possess strong iconographic and stylistic parallels in Roman-Byzantine art, the end panels draw from a strikingly different cultural tradition. Each plaque depicts a fabulous bird, the medieval Chinese mythical animal known as the *feng huang* (see Fig. 30). These motifs are extraordinarily close to medieval Chinese examples in terms of style (see Fig. 31). Yet the precise proportions of the casket and the commonality of carving technique among the panels prove that the short panels are not reused elements. The Troyes Casket therefore incorporates a self-consciously exotic motif into a Byzantine imperial program, creating a striking stylistic contrast between the long and short panels.

The imperial nature of the Troyes Casket is conveyed not only by its iconography but also by the high quality of its materials and fabrication. All six of its original ivory panels are intact; the base is composed of ivory but undecorated. Measuring thirteen by twenty-six by thirteen centimeters, the container is rectangular in form and about the size of a modern shoe box. Its dimensions are particularly noteworthy because the casket is fabricated from solid pieces of ivory, which are unusually thick, measuring about one centimeter each. They are fitted along chamfered (grooved) edges and held together with ivory pegs. This technique requires uncommonly substantial panels, which were relatively rare and, presumably, expensive.[25] Boxes made from wooden cores affixed with ivory and bone plaques were produced in relatively large numbers during the middle Byzantine period, but containers composed from solid ivory panels are less common.[26] The majority of these ivory and/or bone caskets, particularly those depicting secular themes, is constructed with flat, sliding lids, or with polygonal hinged lids, but the Troyes Casket employs a flat, hinged lid that lifts to open.[27] The construction and material of the box demonstrate an unusually high level of craftsmanship.

Another atypical feature of the Troyes Casket, and one that further attests to its elite context of production and use, is its purple-red color. The ivory was



18a. *Solidus* of Alexander (r. 912–13), Constantinople, Byzantine, 912–13, gold, diam. 2.1 cm, wt. 4.46 g, American Numismatic Society, New York, 1959.41.1. Courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

18b. *Solidus* of Romanos I Lekapenos (r. 920–44), Constantinople, Byzantine, 921, gold, diam. 2.1 cm, wt. 4.38 g, Harvard Art Museums, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Bequest of Thomas Whittemore, 1951.3.4.1363. Photo: Imaging Department © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

dyed, presumably in the Byzantine period.[28] The association of purple with royalty was an ancient convention, and the Byzantines continued the Roman tradition of reserving high-quality purple dyes, produced from the sea mollusk known as *murex*, for imperial use.[29] Byzantine production of purple textiles, especially silks, was tightly controlled, and only the emperor and high-ranking courtiers were allowed to wear garments fashioned from this material.[30] The power of purple as an index of imperial status pervaded royal identity of the middle Byzantine period. For instance, the title "porphyrogennetos" (literally "born in the purple") denoted Byzantine princes and princesses birthed in the Porphyra, a porphyry-(purple marble) clad room in the palace at Constantinople reserved for imperial nativities.[31] Thus the themes of imperial triumph and hunt, the quality of the material, the high level of craftsmanship, and the purple color of the Troyes Casket clearly convey its luxury status and affirm an imperial context of production and use.

The Troyes Casket is acknowledged as "a precious statement of Byzantine imperial ideology."[32] Nevertheless its foreign elements and overall lack of overtly Christian reference remain at odds with the typical middle Byzantine imperial representation, characterized by Christian iconography expressing divine sanction of rule. Instead the box presents an image of imperial strength almost completely independent of divine favor. The representation of middle Byzantine emperors endorsed by Christ, the Virgin Mary, or a saint developed gradually. It was not until the reign of Leo VI's brother, Alexander (r. 912–13), that the emperor appeared in a coin crowned by a holy figure, in this instance John the Baptist (Fig. 18.a).[33] The depiction of the emperor crowned by Christ did not feature in coins until 921, during the reign of Romanos I Lekapenos (r. 920–44) (Fig. 18.b).[34] The Troyes Casket demonstrates that during the Macedonian era, the visual trope of divine endorsement was not the exclusive formula for imperial depictions. Indeed, it may represent an intermediate

articulation of the imperial image as it slowly developed toward the more conventional iconographies of divine endorsement and Christomimesis.

In early discussions of the Troyes Casket, the program of the box is judged to be incoherent because it juxtaposes a variety of stylistic, thematic, and iconographic sources.[35] Unable to reconcile these multiple traditions, scholars often deal with the plaques in a piecemeal fashion. Those who address the presence of exotic iconography frequently reproduce only the end panels.[36] Those who focus on the imperial aspects of the program often limit discussion to the lid and front and back panels.[37] By isolating the foreign and indigenous elements from each other, they recapitulate its fragmentation, both visually and interpretatively. The way in which foreign elements are negotiated with imperial imagery on the Troyes Casket has received some scholarly attention, but a convincing reconciliation of its multiple facets is still needed, and hesitation to view the box as a programmatic whole prevails.[38] In addition, the possible debt of the object to art of the Iconoclast era is rarely acknowledged and has never been recognized as a meaningful aspect of the imperial ideology that the object embodies. When Iconoclast sources for the program are suggested, it is typically in order to account for the unusual association of foreign motifs with the imperial image, implying that openness to non-Byzantine artistic models in the imperial sphere was possible only during a period of artistic crisis and unorthodox doctrine.[39] In contrast, my approach to the Troyes Casket values the appropriation of stylistic and iconographic elements from multiple and contrasting sources as a means to convey a cosmopolitan image of imperial dominion. I offer a framework for engaging with the box as a medieval viewer might have, using stylistic disparity, on the one hand, and compositional and semantic parallels, on the other, as cues to the message of the program.[40]

I am sympathetic to scholarly interpretation that sees in the Troyes Casket a potential for the appropriation of exotic motifs to express Byzantine military and political strength in metaphoric terms.[41] However, the particular dynamics at play in this process of artistic adoption – and the Troyes Casket's unique articulation of Byzantine imperial power – require more detailed consideration than heretofore provided. Despite the veneer of continuity and stasis in Byzantine imperial art throughout the centuries, the reality of Byzantine rulership was in constant flux, as contenders for the throne jockeyed for power. Therefore, to understand the message that the Troyes Casket communicates, we must examine it vis-à-vis the shifting political and cultural dynamics of the middle Byzantine period.

CONTEXTUALIZING THE TROYES CASKET: CURRENT ARGUMENTS FOR ITS DATE

A diversity of opinions regarding the date of the Troyes Casket has circulated over the years.[42] Current scholarly consensus recognizes the box's stylistic and

thematic consistency with art of the Macedonian dynasty and places the casket in the tenth or eleventh century.[43] The conservative nature of Byzantine art – especially imperial imagery – makes it difficult to date objects like the Troyes Casket that lack inscriptions identifying the emperor depicted.[44] Stylistic features and techniques of manufacture offer the standard means of dating anepigraphic imperial ivory carvings, and most arguments for the chronology of the Troyes Casket rely on this approach.[45] But the stylistic variety of the Troyes Casket's five carved panels undermines efforts to date the object in this manner and renders inconclusive arguments that privilege stylistic and technical evidence.[46] Another approach associates the triumph depicted on the lid with a specific historical event.[47] In the absence of inscriptions, however, it is more likely that the Troyes Casket represents a perennial and ideal image of imperial authority rather than a particular moment in the history of an individual emperor's reign. This is not to say that historical context is irrelevant to the dating of the box. Rather, broader attitudes toward and concepts of imperial authority, instead of specific events, provide the most useful historical evidence.

Scholars often cite, but do not always sufficiently privilege, iconographic comparanda in determining the date of the casket. This visual evidence provides support for a tenth- to eleventh-century attribution, with some evidence pointing to an early to mid-tenth-century date. The key iconographic feature that can be used as a diagnostic tool is the headgear worn by the two riders on the lid. Byzantine regalia changed over the centuries and therefore provide a means for approximating the date of imperial images. The crowns worn by the Troyes figures are constructed from a double horizontal row of pearls to either side of a square jewel, a pair of *prependoulia* (strings of pearls and precious stones suspended from the temples), and a single equal-armed cross at the peak (see Fig. 21). Crowns such as these were the standard type worn by Macedonian emperors and find general comparisons among a large number of late ninth- to mid-eleventh-century imperial images in mosaics, textiles, ivories, and coins. The most precise parallels are concentrated in objects attributed to the early to mid-tenth century.[48] I am not suggesting that these comparisons support the identification of the figures in the Troyes Casket as a specific imperial pair. Rather, parallels in regalia coordinate the box with the imperial image – and by extension the imperial ideology – of the first half of the tenth century.

In addition to the crowns of the imperial figures on the lid, the birds decorating each end panel help to establish a date range for the box. Specifically, five other instances of the *feng huang* in objects of Byzantine production, all of which can be dated from the tenth to eleventh centuries, offer essential evidence for attributing the box to this period.[49] It is impossible to determine the relative chronology of the five iterations of the *feng huang* in Byzantine art, but one of these objects, a manuscript on horse care, the



19. Textile depicting an emperor, Byzantine, late tenth century, silk, h. 23 cm, w. 68 cm, Cathedral Treasury, Bamberg, Germany.

Hippiatrica (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Cod. Phillips 1538), includes a headpiece that depicts the *feng huang* (fol. 41r) and was commissioned by the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (r. 945–59), thus anchoring the group in the mid-tenth century.[50]

Finally, two other images of the emperor in triumph, both in silk and dated to the late tenth century, offer general parallels to the scene on the lid of the Troyes Casket, further endorsing a tenth-century date for the box.[51] One textile, preserved only in a fragment, depicts a single imperial rider in procession moving to the left (Fig. 19).[52] Like the figures on the Troyes Casket, he wears a cape clasped at the shoulder that billows behind him. His crown is almost identical to that worn by the Troyes emperors. It consists of double, horizontal rows of pearls flanking a square jewel at the center with *prependoulia* hanging at each side.[53] A medallion encircles him, indicating that the motif may have repeated across the textile. Unlike the figures on the Troyes Casket, he wears courtly attire in the form of a jeweled *skaramangion* (full-length, long-sleeved robe), detracting from the military aspect of the image. He is nimbed and raises one hand in a gesture of *adlocutio* (address), which is traditionally associated with triumph.[54]

The other textile depicting a mounted emperor was found in the tomb of Bishop Gunther of Bamberg (Fig. 20), who died in 1065, providing a mid-eleventh-century *terminus ante quem* for the object. Most recently, the textile has been dated to around 971.[55] It also presents a relatively nonmilitaristic image of imperial power. In particular, the rider is shown wearing the same courtly garment, the *skaramangion*, and his horse is generously adorned with ribbons and gems, which indicate the ceremonial nature of the procession. The emperor is nimbed and holds a *labarum* (a staff topped with a rectangular panel). He is flanked by two female figures, most likely personifications of conquered cities, who offer crowns as a symbol of submission. Damage in the area



20. Textile depicting an emperor, Byzantine, Constantinople, late tenth century, silk, h. 220 cm, w. 210 cm, Cathedral Treasury, Bamberg, Germany.

of the emperor's head makes it impossible to determine the exact structure of his crown, but it includes rows of pearls to either side of a central gem which is surmounted by a cross.

Although both textiles are strongly related to the Troyes Casket in terms of theme and share some iconographic details, neither silk offers an exact parallel. In particular, they show the emperor in purely ceremonial attire while the figures on the lid of the Troyes casket wear military gear. This distinction represents a significant difference in the conception of the rulers depicted and the messages of the scenes. The Troyes Casket riders are shown actively engaged in the expansion of empire, while the silks show only the ceremonial recognition of triumphs already earned. While the textiles are useful for dating the casket to the tenth century, they also show distinctions that are sufficient to question any argument that insists on their strictly coterminous production. Still, the iconographic features of imperial figures and *feng huang* birds – as well as their comparanda in other works of middle Byzantine art – support placing the Troyes Casket in the tenth century.

MACEDONIAN IMPERIAL ICONOGRAPHY AND IDEOLOGY

Iconographic analysis of the Troyes Casket's program must begin with consideration of the sequence in which a viewer would have encountered and coordinated the scenes on the object.[56] I discuss first the lid, which the viewer gazed upon as he reached to open the box; second the front panel, which he faced in the process of unfastening the lock; third the back panel, which corresponds logically in theme and style with the front panel, making an obvious pendant image; and finally the identical short end panels. It must be noted that the organization of motifs on the casket assumes additional significance when one considers, albeit hypothetically, how the end panels would have been obscured when the box was viewed from the front. Furthermore, when the box was lifted and carried, the bearer presumably held it at either side, covering the images of the birds. The peripheral nature of the spaces that these exotic motifs occupy makes an important statement regarding the relative hierarchy of indigenous and foreign imagery in the semiotic field of the object. The scenes of triumph and the hunt receive more "square footage" and visual prominence, implying their centrality and authority, both within the visual program and within the message that it conveys.

Nonetheless it is possible to read the position of the non-Byzantine motifs as an essential aspect of the program: They emerge only after the viewer has "read" the longer scenes and provide something of a semantic twist that might even require the viewer to reconsider or expand his interpretation of the otherwise conventional hunt and triumph scenes. While the end panels introduce a stylistically disjunct element, the birds simultaneously echo formal and

compositional features of the longer plaques, harmonizing them visually with the other sections of the program. Each plaque applies a similar approach to the organization of the picture field, with figures and ornament filling the available space in highly balanced compositions. At the same time, the panels establish subtle formal contrasts. The scenes on each long panel depict pairs or quads of figures symmetrically arranged around a central element (the walled city; the lion; the boar and tree). Yet the hunter and dogs on the back panel move sharply toward the boar at center, producing an inward movement that contrasts with the lid, in which the more static mounted emperors face outward, generating an open composition. The front panel straddles these two directions of motion: The horses move outward, but twist their heads back toward the center, while the hunters likewise turn, directing their violent gestures inward. The birds on the end panels twist their heads back toward their tails, echoing the postures of both the boar on the back panel and the mounts on the front plaque. Despite their stylistic alterity and peripheral placement, the end panels are still integral to the viewer's experience of the box, both visually and, as discussed below, semantically. Although the five panels present a diversity of stylistic and iconographic sources, they collaborate to express an imperial concept that relied on the appropriation of foreign elements and the allusion to earlier Byzantine models to inflect the image of the middle Byzantine emperor in a manner consistent with Macedonian imperial ideology of the tenth century.

The Lid

On the lid, two mounted figures ride outward on a plain before a walled city, which rises in the background and marks the central axis of the picture field (Fig. 21). Considering the small scale of this scene – the plaque measures only thirteen by twenty-six centimeters – the city is rendered in remarkable detail. Even more remarkable is the meticulous depiction of the inhabitants of the city. Figures stand and sit among the battlements and gaze toward the riders. Some raise their hands in gestures of homage or welcome. Two figures, at the left and right sides, straddle the wall, dangling their legs over the edge. Additional figures stand in the doors of the tower and halls. The animated poses of the citizenry add a sense of immediacy and naturalism to the scene.

A woman exits the open gate in the city wall and strides vigorously toward the horseman at the right, offering a diadem. This lively figure is a tyche (civic personification), as indicated by the mural crown upon her head. Although during the Roman period a multitude of tyche figures wore mural crowns, in the Byzantine era, the attribute came to be associated with the tyche of Constantinople, suggesting that the walled city from which the figure departs represents the Byzantine capital.[57] Her costume – a full-length skirt covered by



21. Detail of lid, Troyes Casket, Constantinople (?), Byzantine, tenth century, ivory, Cathedral Treasury, Troyes, France.

a long tunic gathered at the waist and elaborately decorated around the collar – was worn by various female pagan figures in early Byzantine art, including goddesses, victories, and personifications.[58] Tychai were not commonly depicted in middle Byzantine art, and the inclusion of this figure in the Troyes Casket is an archaism, harkening back to a Roman-Byzantine visual vocabulary of civic authority.[59]

Although no inscription identifies the riders, current scholarly consensus interprets them as an emperor and his heir.[60] Each wears the jeweled crown, known as a *stemma*, which was a typical regalis for the middle Byzantine ruler. As already noted, the crown consists of double, horizontal rows of pellets, representing pearls, which flank a single, square jewel at the center. From the sides of each crown hang *prependoulia*, which terminate in tripartite ornaments. A cross composed of four arms of equal length projects above the central gem. The crosses represent the only explicitly Christian reference in the iconographic program of the box, and their significance must be noted. Cross-emblazoned crowns serve as visual metonyms for Christ, the divine source of the emperor's power.

The riders wear military attire modeled on that of a Roman general: pleated (possibly leather) skirts, cross-hatched leggings (perhaps representing mail), boots, lamellar (scaled) cuirasses, and mantles held at the shoulder with prominent *fibulae* (pins). The riders' horses are elaborately caparisoned in jeweled harnesses with alternating rectangular and oval gems. Crescent-shaped pendants hang from the lower straps; the pendants around the chest of each horse are connected by a string of beads. Each rider carries a spear, and his feet are



22. Electrotype of a gold medallion of Constantius I Chlorus (r. 293–306), Roman, ca. 296, diam. 4.2 cm, British Museum, London, B.11477. © Trustees of the British Museum.

supported by stirrups. Their cloaks billow behind them in graceful curves. Although the riders' costumes display some military features, the richly ornamented horse trappings and the emperors' elaborate crowns indicate that this scene represents not a battle, but a ritual event of military character. Indeed, close comparisons for the Troyes Casket riders are found in Roman-Byzantine depictions of the victorious emperor (see Fig. 22), indicating the potentially archaizing quality of the scene.[61]

Early scholarship on the Troyes Casket identifies the scene on the lid as the submission of the city, with the vanquished tyche offering the crown as a sign of defeat.[62] This interpretation is problematic, however, because the emperors wear ceremonial crowns, not military headgear, and the tyche does not kneel in prostration as she does in Roman-Byzantine examples. For instance, a gold medallion of Constantius Chlorus (r. 293–306), the father of Constantine I, depicts the emperor approaching the wall of London, in front of which kneels the tyche with her hands raised in homage (Fig. 22).[63] On the Troyes Casket, the tyche instead welcomes the returning emperors to their capital city. There persists some ambiguity in the scene because the emperors face away from the city, and each horse raises one hoof as if to depart. These details have prompted suggestion that the Troyes Casket may depict an imperial *profectio* (military departure ceremony).[64] Yet the tyche clearly greets the emperors as soldier-kings returning in triumph, a ceremony known as *adventus* ("approach"; a military ceremony of triumphal return).[65] Roman-Byzantine depictions of *adventus* convey "approach" in more literal terms, with the emperor clearly moving toward the city.[66] However, beginning in the fourth century, Byzantine representations of *adventus* showed an increasing tendency toward stasis, as seen in the so-called Kerch Plate, a *largitio* (imperial largesse distributed on ceremonial occasions in the form of silver dishes) plate depicting the triumphal emperor Constantius II (r. 337–61) (Fig. 23). Tranquility, rather than movement, was the quality that early Byzantine triumphal images strove to convey.[67]



23. *Largitio* dish of Constantius II (r. 337–61), Roman-Byzantine, mid-fourth century, gilded and nielloed silver, diam. 25 cm, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, inv. no. 1820/79. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Vladimir Terebenin, Leonard Kheifets, Yuri Molodkovets.

Most importantly, various features of the scene on the lid recall details of Byzantine *adventus* rituals. The *stemma* in the tyche's hands brings to mind the presentation of triumphal crowns, which was an essential element of the ceremony.[68] Each emperor on the lid holds a spear, an attribute of *adventus* in early Byzantine depictions (see Fig. 22). The emperors are positioned at some distance from the city, an arrangement that corresponds to the first phase of *adventus*, when the ruler was greeted beyond the city walls by officials and the populace. According to ancient tradition, the greater the distance that the welcome procession traveled outside the city, the greater the honor shown to the persons received.[69] During the triumph of Basil I in 879, for example, two ceremonies were observed outside the city walls, one of which involved the emperor changing from his riding outfit into military attire, a costume that echoes that worn by the riders on the Troyes Casket.[70] The image should

not, however, be taken literally. There is no indication that it depicts a specific historical event. Rather, it represents a more general and perennial concept of imperial power. With this in mind, the lid might be best understood as conflating the departure and return of the ruler and his heir; the tyche foreshadows the victory that the emperors are sure to gain.

The pose of the imperial figures is quite stiff, especially in their legs and torsos. The much more fluid rendering of the miniature tyche in the doorway to the city suggests that the riders' rigid form was not due to shortcomings of artistic skill, but rather represents a stylistic choice, which carried with it a set of associated meanings.[71] In fact, Byzantine conventions for imperial representation frequently render the emperor stiff and "statuelike," a quality celebrated in descriptions of Roman-Byzantine emperors on procession and thought to be indicative of the emperor's composure and dignity.[72]

Although the imperial horsemen are identically clothed and mounted, the figure on the right takes the position of honor and most likely represents the senior ruler.[73] The tyche exiting the city presents a crown to the figure on the right, indicating his precedence. The higher status of the right-hand figure is further expressed by his more emphatic frontality, which became, during the Roman-Byzantine period, an important element of imperial portraits.[74] The face of the senior rider is parallel to the picture plane, and his proper right arm projects sharply back in space, indicating that his torso is turned frontally. In contrast, the proper left arm of the rider on the viewer's left projects forward, indicating that his torso is turned to the side and angled away from the picture plane.[75] Despite strong parallels in the clothing, regalia, and physiognomy of the two figures, this subtle difference in posture – combined with the tyche's orientation – conveys the higher status of the rider on the right. At the same time, the emperors' almost identical appearances express their union of mind and spirit and their common destiny as ruler and heir, a convention common to Roman-Byzantine, Iconoclast, and middle Byzantine representations of co-emperors.[76]

By depicting an emperor and his heir, the Troyes Casket highlights the concept of imperial succession, which was a major concern of the Macedonian dynasty.[77] Founded by the upstart Basil I – who, as noted above, began as a groom in the imperial stables, befriended the emperor Michael III, and later murdered him to claim the throne – the Macedonian dynasty struggled to establish its legitimacy and continuity. The concern for guaranteeing a secure succession to the throne during Basil's reign is apparent in works of art from the period.[78] Basil's son, Leo VI (r. 886–912), was plagued by childlessness, and his eventual heir, Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, waited over thirty years to assume the throne while regents and usurpers ruled in his stead.[79] For these reasons, art produced under the early Macedonians paid particular attention to dynastic succession.

Co-emperors are not commonly depicted in earlier, Roman-Byzantine representations of *adventus*, but concern for dynastic succession was prevalent in the Iconoclast era, and Macedonian strategies for promoting dynastic succession may have been adopted from Iconoclast exemplars.[80] This debt is evident in Macedonian numismatic iconography, which imitates coin types of Iconoclast emperors that foreground dynastic continuity.[81] The Macedonians may also have been inspired by the emphasis on succession in Iconoclast era triumphal processions: The emperor Theophilos, for example, rode with his son-in-law and heir apparent Alexis Musele in his triumph of 837, a fact noted in a compilation of documents on military matters produced by Constantine VII for his son, Romanos II, around 952.[82]

The Troyes Casket's focus on the relationship between emperor and successor emphasizes an important symbolic aspect of *adventus*: the demonstration of loyalty to the ruler.[83] The ritual of triumphal procession celebrated the populace's renewed endorsement of the emperor, and the presence of the heir apparent would have provided the opportunity to affirm dynastic inheritance, with allegiance demonstrated to both the current sovereign and his future successor. Indeed, as noted above, Theophilos was accompanied by his heir apparent, Alexis Musele, in the triumph of 837. During his triumph in 879, Basil I rode with his son and co-emperor, Constantine (d. 879), in order to emphasize the prince's association with the imperial office, despite the fact that Constantine had not played a key role in the victories.[84] The continuing importance of the practice is attested in ceremonies performed by the later Macedonian emperor Basil II (r. 976–1025), who celebrated triumphal entries at Constantinople alongside his brother and co-emperor, Constantine VIII (r. 1025–8), in 989 and 1019.[85]

Indeed, it was particularly in the military realm that Iconoclast emperors sparked Macedonian interest. The mid-tenth-century text, *On Imperial Military Expeditions*, documents practical matters for the preparation and performance of military missions as well as the ritual and ideology of imperial triumph. It was written by Constantine VII for his son Romanos II. Constantine explains that the contents were based in part on a military treatise commissioned by his father, Leo VI. This suggests that although Constantine's text dates to the mid-tenth century, it reflects concepts and practices of Leo's rule in the late ninth century and early tenth century. The text shows no hesitation in celebrating martial achievements and promoting triumphal practices of the Iconoclast era. A section that reflects this open attitude warrants citation in full:

> Now an order and procedure for imperial expeditions such as the aforementioned was observed and put into practice up until the time of Michael the Christ-loving Despot [i.e. Michael III, murdered by Basil] and of Bardas his uncle, the most fortunate Kaisar, this tradition clearly having been handed down to them from the preceding emperors, that is

> to say Theophilos and Michael, the father and grandfather of the same Michael the Christ-loving Despot. Which is to say that such a tradition came down to them in the same way from the earlier emperors. By "earlier," I mean those Isaurians [the Iconoclast-era dynasty that preceded the Amorians] who fell into the gravest error with regard to the Orthodox faith; I do not mean by "earlier" the great and famed and holy Constantine, nor Constantius his son, nor the most impious Julian, nor even Theodosius the Great and those who came after him. This very procedure was again put into practice during the reign of Basil the most courageous and most pious emperor, my grandfather, and was precisely observed in the manner which we shall endeavor, as far as is possible, to demonstrate in writing.[86]

Although the Amorian and Isaurian emperors are not celebrated for their orthodoxy, they are cited as authoritative sources in military matters, which is not surprising given the military successes of Constantine V and Theophilos against various Arab-Islamic groups. By clearly affiliating Macedonian martial practices and ceremonial observances with those of their Iconoclast forerunners – and explicitly not with the Roman-Byzantine emperors of the fourth century, who were otherwise frequently evoked as models for Macedonian emperors – Constantine VII emulates Iconoclast exemplars in the military sphere.[87] It stands to reason that the recognition of Iconoclast forerunners in Macedonian military treatises could have prompted a modeling of the visual codes for military rituals, like triumph, on those same sources. Indeed, Theophilos's victory celebrations of 837 feature prominently in *On Imperial Military Expeditions* and provided a relatively recent exemplar for triumphal ceremonies.[88] The Troyes Casket can therefore be positioned within a larger phenomenon of Macedonian adoption of earlier imperial visual models and textual sources from both the early Byzantine and Iconoclast eras.

In the Troyes Casket, Roman-Byzantine elements traditionally associated with imperial triumph appear in a variety of details. The self-conscious fashioning of middle Byzantine triumphal imagery on that of Roman-Byzantine forerunners is not surprising: the Byzantines promoted themselves as direct heirs of Roman political tradition.[89] Yet the Byzantines did not slavishly copy precedent. Rather, they adapted it to suit their needs, creating a pastiche of former practices that Michael McCormick compares to "the use of classical spolia in medieval monuments, for all the identity of constituent elements, the resulting whole is surprisingly novel."[90] In the Troyes Casket, the emphasis on the royal pair departs from Roman-Byzantine models and reflects Macedonian anxiety surrounding dynastic succession, which may have led them to emulate aspects of Iconoclast era art and ritual. Furthermore, otherworldly endorsement of the emperor is not expressed in explicit terms. Instead, the cross alone – surmounting the imperial crowns – asserts the origin of authority in divine sanction. As McCormick demonstrates through textual analysis, the triumphal



24. Detail of front panel, casket, Constantinople (?), Byzantine, tenth century, ivory, Cathedral Treasury, Troyes, France.

ceremonies of Byzantium were highly mutable; each period adapted tradition to serve new practical and ideological needs. It is not surprising that the imagery associated with triumph would likewise evolve, reflecting, but not exactly mirroring, the observances and depictions of earlier eras.

The Front and Back Panels

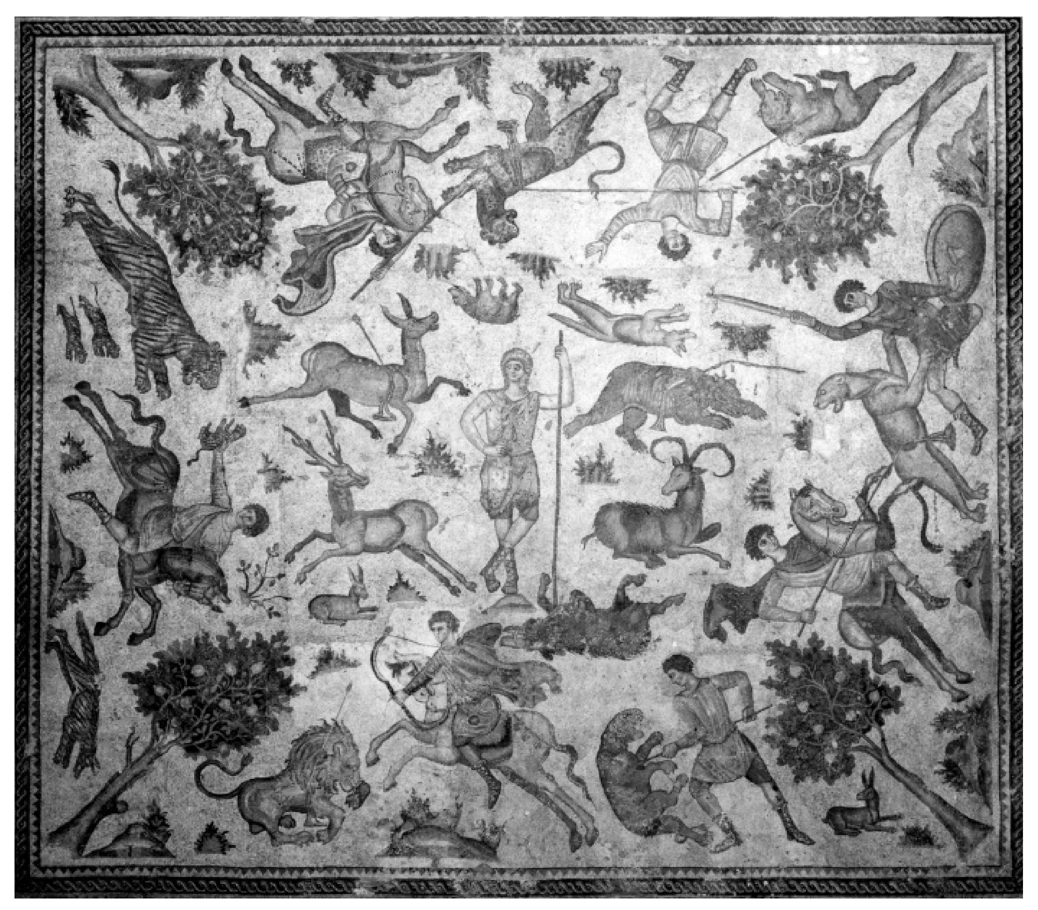
Complementing the archaizing scene of imperial *adventus* on the lid of the Troyes Casket, the front and back panels depict the royal hunt. Like the *adventus* scene, the hunts borrow elements from Roman-Byzantine depictions, but combine these features with middle Byzantine and possibly Iconoclast-era elements to create novel types. On the front plaque, two mounted figures charge outward in mirror-image poses (Fig. 24). The horses twist their heads toward their tails, while the riders turn backward in their saddles to attack a lion. The archer, at the left, draws an arrow in his bow and aims at the lion, which has already received two arrows in the back of its neck. The figure on the right raises a sword in his right hand, above his head, preparing to strike the lunging beast; in his left hand, he holds a shield decorated with stars. The hunters wear the same military costumes as the imperial figures on the lid, but their headgear differs: The rider on the left wears a crested helmet; the rider on the right wears a form-fitting helmet incised with stars, which matches his shield. The horses lack the crescent-shaped pendants and alternating oval and rectangular gems found in the caparisons of the horses in the triumph scene. They instead wear simple, utilitarian harnesses.



25. Detail of back panel, casket, Constantinople (?), Byzantine, tenth century, ivory, Cathedral Treasury, Troyes, France.

On the back panel, a figure on foot lunges from the upper left corner to spear a wild boar at center while collared hunting dogs attack the beast from the other three corners (Fig. 25). The hunter wears an undecorated helmet and military attire, but no mantle. He stands on top of an object, which could be his rumpled cloak or a large, exposed rock. Behind the boar, an oak tree, heavy with acorns, marks the central axis of the picture field. Boar was commonly hunted from horseback, typically with the aid of nets. Their great speed made hunting them on foot extremely difficult and dangerous.[91] The method depicted on the reverse of the Troyes Casket, therefore, represents hunting virtuosity.

The landscape settings of both scenes are only minimally depicted, making it difficult to identify the contexts in which these hunts take place. In the Roman-Byzantine period, professional animal hunts, known as *venatio*, were staged as popular entertainment, and depictions of these public spectacles are found in domestic mosaics of the period.[92] By the middle Byzantine era, however, animal shows in the hippodrome seem to have been limited to animal-against-animal combats.[93] During the middle Byzantine period, emperors kept game parks in and around Constantinople. These reserves were stocked with wild beasts, both domestic and exotic. Lion and wild boar were among the animals attested in Constantinople, and either could, theoretically, have served as game for an imperial hunt.[94] The scenes on the Troyes Casket, therefore, may refer to a hunt in the "wilds" of a royal game park. Just as the *venatio* depicted in mosaics that adorned the homes of wealthy Romans honored the



26. Hunting Scene, House of the Worcester Hunt, Antioch, Roman, sixth century, mosaic, 625.8 by 716.2 cm, Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts, 1936.30. Excavations of Antioch and Vicinity funded by the bequests of the Reverend Dr. Austin S. Garver and Sarah C. Garver.

patrons who commissioned both the actual performances and the artistic commemorations of these events, the imperial hunts on the Troyes Casket attest to the wealth and bounty of the imperial hunting grounds and, by extension, the "privileges and pleasures" of the emperor who owned them.[95]

Like the scene of triumph on the lid, the representations of the hunt are consistent with certain aspects of Roman-Byzantine models. For example, swords, bows, and lances of similar type are depicted as weapons in Roman-Byzantine hunting scenes.[96] All three appear in the sixth-century mosaic from the House of Worcester Hunt at Daphne, near Antioch, in which armed men hunt wild animals, including lions and boar, both from horseback and on foot (Fig. 26).[97] While the feet of imperial figures on the lid are firmly placed in stirrups, the riders on the front panel do not make use of this equipment. Stirrups were unknown in the Roman world and did not become widely used



27. Scene of a boar hunt, Villa del Casale, Piazza Armerina, Sicily, Italy, Roman, third or fourth century, mosaic. Photo credit: Scala / Art Resource, NY.

until the seventh to ninth centuries. In this respect, the figures in the lion hunt follow earlier Roman-Byzantine depictions.[98] The hunting dogs on the back panel of the Troyes Casket are distinctive for their pointed noses, lean bodies, and neck collars and find close parallels in Roman-Byzantine mosaic depictions of the hunt, for example, a fragment of the early fourth-century mosaic from Piazza Armerina in Sicily, which also depicts a comparable scene of the boar hunt (Fig. 27).[99] Illustrations in middle Byzantine copies of the early third-century treatise on hunting, the *Cynegetica*, show general similarities to the Troyes Casket; for instance, the boar hunt on the back panel parallels the hunt of Orion and Atalanta in a mid-eleventh-century manuscript (Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, cod. gr. 2479, fol. 20v), in which an oak tree stands in the center of the composition and a wild boar, similar in appearance to that on the Troyes Casket, forages around the roots (Fig. 28).[100]

The hunting scenes on the Troyes Casket diverge, however, from Roman-Byzantine tradition in other respects. As mentioned already, the hunters on the Troyes Casket – like the emperors on the lid – wear military attire. In contrast, Roman-Byzantine hunters are typically dressed in tunics and cloaks (see Figs. 26 and 27). Scholars argue that the military costumes of the Troyes hunters link the depiction of the hunt with that of triumph on the lid, a visual



28. The hunt of Orion and Atalanta, Byzantine, mid-eleventh century, pigment on vellum, Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, cod. gr. 2479, fol. 20v.

metaphor in keeping with textual evidence in which the hunt and war are equated.[101] For example, in a tenth-century letter to the emperor Romanos II, the courtier Theodore Daphnopates (d. after 961) refers to game hunted by the emperor and sent to Theodore as symbols of Romanos's perpetual triumph over barbarians.[102] Triumph in war and triumph in the hunt are thus conflated; both express the conquest of imperial adversaries.[103]

Although the program of the Troyes Casket resonates with Roman-Byzantine models, it diverges from conventional middle Byzantine imperial iconography, in which emperors are not typically portrayed in military attire or in pursuit of wild animals.[104] But celebration of the emperor's skill in war and the hunt was a recurring aspect of imperial encomia. The metaphoric dovetailing of hunt and battle is found in emperor Leo VI's late ninth- to early tenth-century funerary oration to his father Basil I, in which Leo states that Basil pursued the Hagarenes (Muslims) like wild beasts, a statement that offers

another instance of the metaphoric conflation of battle and hunt.[105] Similarly, John Geometres (fl. ca. 950) spoke of Leo VI in his funeral oration as "renewing the pursuit of the Hagarenes, like wild beasts, a chase which had been for so long ignored."[106] In addition the hunt could play an important role in the stories intended to legitimize new rulers; the ascents to power of both Basil I and Romanos I Lekapenos were purportedly marked by successful animal combats.[107] The presence of this rhetorical device in ninth- to tenth-century imperial panegyrics supports inclusion of the hunt within the ideal image of the early Macedonian emperors.

Roman-Byzantine hunters are typically depicted bareheaded (see Figs. 26 and 27), while the hunters on the Troyes Casket wear helmets. This headgear possesses a distinctly military character. The crested helmet of the rider on the left is commonly – but incorrectly – identified as a *toupha*. It is not, however, the peacock–feather–plumed headgear found in early and middle Byzantine triumphal texts and images.[108] It is instead more utilitarian, constructed of a closed helmet with a stiff, short crest.[109] It resembles headgear of soldiers found ubiquitously in Roman-Byzantine art, for example, the imperial guard attending Valentinian I (r. 364–75) in a silver *largitio* plate (Fig. 29).[110] The form-fitting helmets without crests worn by the swordsman and boar hunter also resemble types depicted in Roman-Byzantine art.[111]

In Roman-Byzantine art, the crested helmet is rarely associated with emperors. Rather, soldiers, especially the imperial guard, wear this headgear.[112] In addition, the emperor typically does not carry a bow and arrow, but a sword, as does the figure on the right. These details suggest that the scene on the front panel parallels the image on the lid by representing an emperor, placed in the position of honor on the right, and his heir on the left, who wears the crested helmet typical of the imperial guard and hunts with a less distinguished weapon, a bow and arrow. As such, the image reflects an important aspect of the triumphal scene on the lid: To the extent that *adventus* enacted civic allegiance to the emperor, the scene of an heir or guard defending the ruler from a wild beast would express a comparable statement of loyalty. Indeed, before assuming sole rule, Basil I slew a wolf that attacked the then-emperor Michael III, a deed said to foreshadow Basil's later ascent to the throne.[113]

Another distinguishing feature of the lion hunt is the pose of the riders. The hunters turn sharply in their saddles, with foreground legs pointing back (as indicated by the direction of their feet) and background legs pointing forward (visible behind the foliage in the lower corners).[114] Backward-turning riders appear in Roman-Byzantine depictions of the hunt, but such figures always twist at their waists while keeping both legs bent and pointed forward.[115] The straight legs of the Troyes hunters – and the foreground legs that point backward – do not appear in Roman-Byzantine hunting scenes, nor do their static



29. *Largitio* plate of Valentinian I (r. 364–75), Roman-Byzantine, second half of the fourth century, silver, diam 27.2 cm, wt. 1050 g, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva, inv. no. C 1241. © Musée d'art et d'histoire, Ville de Genève. Photo: Jean-Marc Yersin.

forms and relative two-dimensionality recall Roman-Byzantine precedents.[116] The "otherness" of the backward-shooting pose is indicated by the modern term for this position, the "Parthian Shot," which refers to its Near Eastern origin. The most readily available model for the pose in the middle Byzantine period was found in art of the Iconoclast era, which in turn adopted the Parthian-Shot motif from Sasanain-Islamic models (see Figs. 10 and 14).[117] As discussed in Chapter 1, the pose appears in Byzantine "hunter silks," which are dated to the eighth and ninth centuries (see Figs. 9, 12, and 13).

While the textiles discussed in Chapter 1 attest to the use of Sasanian-Islamic elements of royal prerogative during the Iconoclast period, the Troyes Casket demonstrates either a willingness to preserve these exotic elements of Iconoclast imperial imagery in Macedonian ruler iconography, or the result of a process of assimilation, by which formerly exotic motifs have now become domesticated

and function as an integral aspect of Byzantine imagery. The hunt scenes on the Troyes Casket continue the appropriation and recombination apparent in the *adventus* vignette on the lid by drawing together elements related to both Roman-Byzantine and Iconoclast sources. Yet while the Troyes Casket unites disparate themes – triumph and the hunt – and draws directly and indirectly from a diverse range of earlier artistic traditions, its program coherent. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, Roman-Byzantine and Sasanian-Islamic traditions portrayed the defeat of wild beasts as a literal expression of the ruler's strength and bravery as well as a metaphor for his conquest of enemies in battle.

The End Panels

The carvings on the lid and front and back panels of the Troyes Casket resonate stylistically with one another and are easily related in terms of iconography. In contrast, the end panels (Fig. 30) depart strikingly from this pattern by depicting two birds of decidedly foreign origin whose significance to the program as a whole is not immediately apparent. In both style and iconography, the birds are unmistakably appropriated from medieval Chinese luxury objects.[118] As noted above, they depict the mythical animal, known in Chinese as the *feng huang*.[119] This motif was especially popular in works of art dating to the Tang dynasty (r. 618–907) (Fig. 31). Tang iconography served in turn as a model for later medieval representations produced during the Liao (907–1125) and Song (960–1279) dynasties.[120] The Liao and Song dynasties were contemporary with the proposed date of the Troyes Casket, and works of art from these periods therefore offer possibly contemporaneous sources for the motif. It is unknown how the *feng huang* reached Byzantium, but the existence of several tenth- to eleventh-century Byzantine objects depicting the motif indicates its popularity. It may have arrived at the court in Constantinople via a diplomatic gift or circulated on an object that was traded in the marketplace and traveled to Byzantium via the Silk Road commercial network.[121]

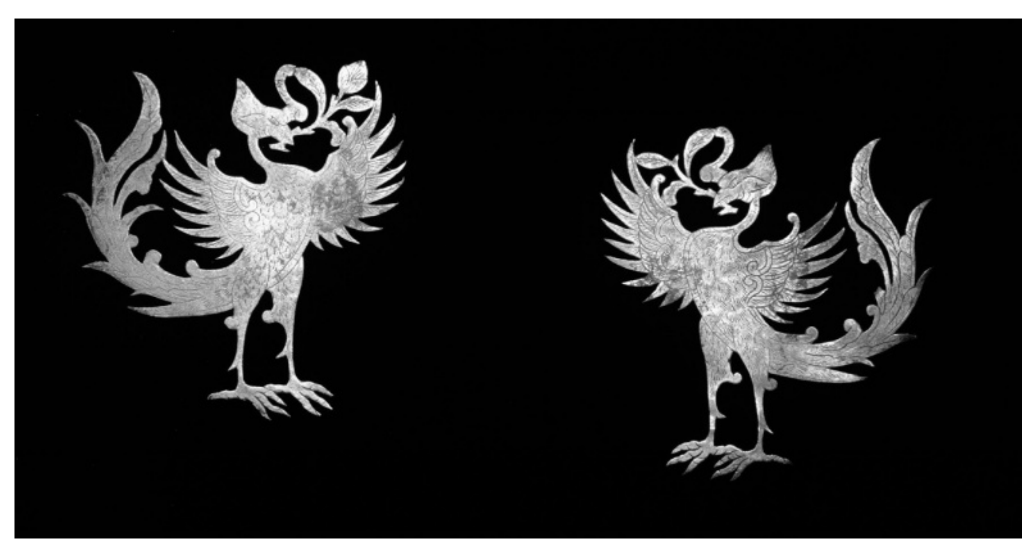
As noted above, some studies of the Troyes Casket, especially those that focus on the imperial significance of its program, exclude the *feng huang* from their discussions. Others recognize the source of the motif in medieval Chinese art, but do not pursue the semantic potentials of the *feng huang* within the program as a whole.[122] Arguments that do propose a meaning for the motif often assume an assimilation of the *feng huang* with the Greco-Roman phoenix.[123] This line of reasoning is attractive because in Roman-Byzantine political iconography, the phoenix symbolized imperial renewal and the dawn of golden ages, a significance that would provide the five panels of the Troyes Casket with a common program of imperial might and victory.[124]

An argument in favor of the elision of the *feng huang* and phoenix suffers, however, from a major shortcoming: The *feng huang* does not resemble the





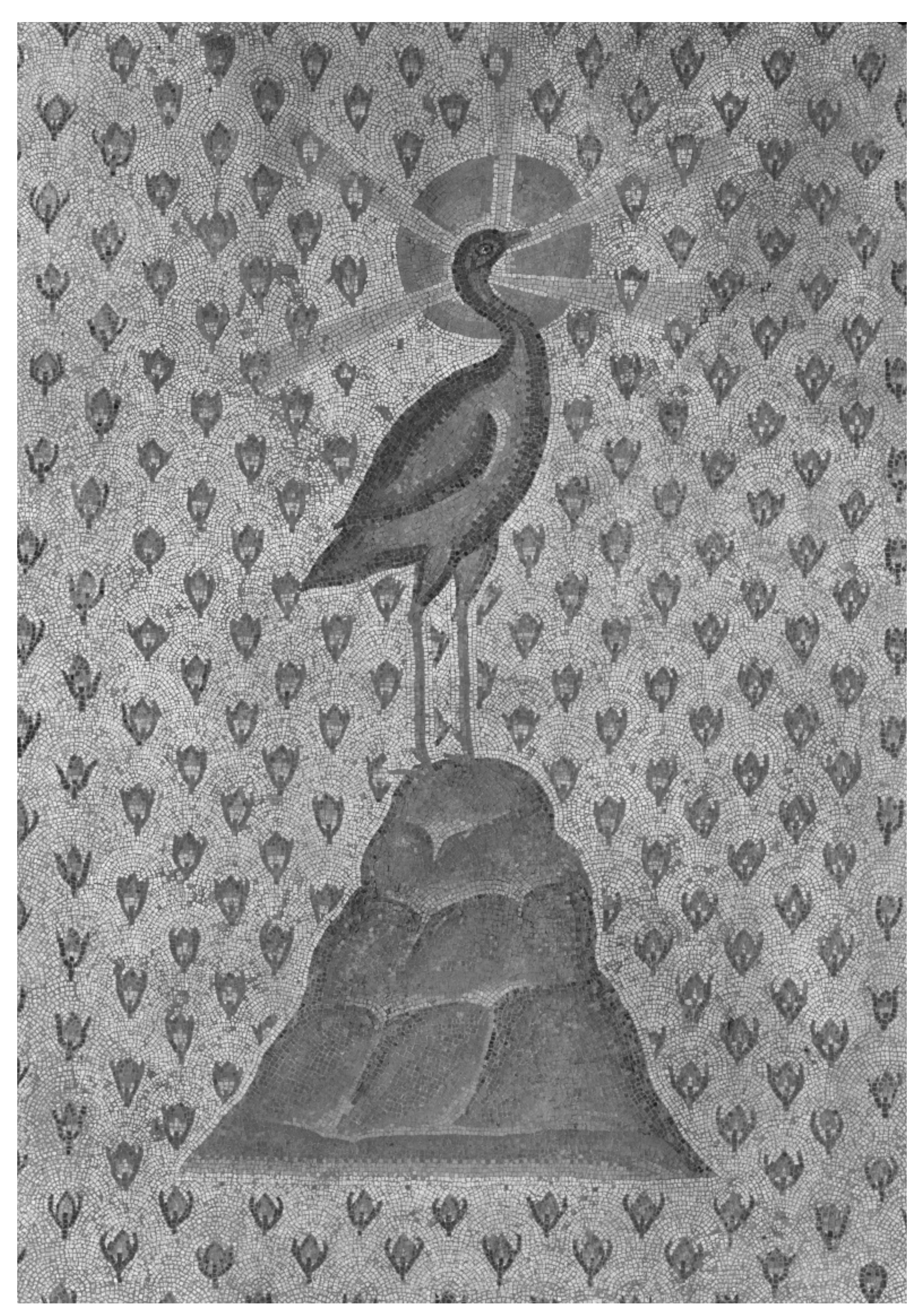
30. a and b. Details of short panels showing the *feng huang*, Troyes Casket, Constantinople (?), Byzantine, tenth century, ivory, Cathedral Treasury, Troyes, France.



31. Ornaments in the shape of the *feng huang*, Chinese, Tang dynasty, late seventh to early eighth centuries, gold sheet, h 5.1 cm, Collection of Myron S. Falk, Jr., New York. Photo: Werner Forman / Art Resource, NY.

phoenix of Roman-Byzantine art, which is shaped like a heron, with long, thin legs and a compact body.[125] The Roman-Byzantine phoenix is typically nimbed and often stands atop a small hill, as for example in a fifth-century mosaic from the eponymous House of the Phoenix at Daphne, near Antioch (Fig. 32).[126] In coins of Constantine I (r. 326–37) and his successors, a similar motif expresses dynastic renewal and the virtue of the emperor (Fig. 33).[127] Had the designer of the Troyes Casket intended to evoke this late antique emblem of imperial power, presumably he could have done so in more direct visual terms, as was the case in the scenes on the lid, front, and back, which attest to a strong familiarity with Roman-Byzantine images of the hunt and triumph.

In addition to the striking stylistic similarity between the *feng huang* and the birds on the Troyes Casket, the *feng huang* is frequently depicted on Chinese objects in pairs, as on the Troyes Casket, while the Roman-Byzantine phoenix appears alone.[128] Adherence to this aspect of medieval Chinese artistic convention is significant because the Troyes Casket is the only intact middle Byzantine ivory box that repeats the same figure on its two end panels.[129] The appropriation of a Chinese stylistic idiom and the observance of Chinese representational conventions suggest a conscious selection and well-informed adaptation of foreign types over readily available Roman-Byzantine models. At the same time, the isolation of this foreign element to the visual and physical periphery of the box recognizes and reinforces its alterity. The non-Byzantine style of the *feng huang* on the Troyes Casket could have been intended to emphasize the "otherness" of the motif; the bird effectively connoted exotic origin and luxury, conveying value through rarity and unfamiliarity.



32. Floor from the House of the Phoenix, Daphnis near Antioch, Roman-Byzantine, late fifth century, mosaic, 600 by 425 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France, MA 3442. Photo: C. Jean/J. Schormans. Photo Credit: Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY.





33. *Nummus* of Constans I (r. 337–50), Roman-Byzantine, 348–50, bronze, diam. 1.7 cm, wt. 2.45 g. American Numismatic Society, New York, 1984.146.2170. Courtesy of the American Numismatic Society.

Still the possibility remains that the designer of the Troyes Casket program had a more specific meaning in mind for the *feng huang*. Like the lid and front and back panels, the end panels may draw from Roman-Byzantine representations of imperial triumph, albeit not through the direct imitation of iconographic or stylistic features, but instead through the evocation of the concepts that underlie earlier images of imperial power. As discussed in the Introduction, Roman-Byzantine representations of the emperor, including the Obelisk of Theodosios (see Fig. 5) and the Barberini polyptych (see Fig. 6), depict humbled captives as a sign of imperial conquest. These submissive figures represent the vast extent of the emperor's domain and his unquestionable control of these rich and distant territories. In keeping with the concepts at work in Roman-Byzantine images of imperium, the emphatically exotic style of the *feng huang* may serve much the same role as the prostrate barbarians: namely, to convey the subservience of foreign peoples and the breadth of the Byzantine ruler's control. Just as barbarians kneel before Theodosios I and Justinian I in early Byzantine works of art, so, too, the *feng huang* pays homage to the Byzantine ruler and his heir, recognizing their hegemony. As such, the *feng huang* works in tandem with the hunting scenes and image of imperial triumph to communicate the concept of Byzantine conquest and authority over foreign peoples. Yet unlike Roman-Byzantine works of art, in which domination of barbarians is depicted literally, the designer of the Troyes Casket employs a more subtle approach, using stylistic alterity to express foreign origin.

The positioning of the *feng huang* emphasizes the distance of the imperial borders and the extent of empire (see Fig. 17). Situated at the ends of the box and outside the visual field of the lid and front and back panels, the birds convey the vast expanse between the center of empire, represented by the city on the lid, and the distant periphery, from which the birds originate. The intermediate hunting scenes represent zones of conquest, the space between the center and edges of empire, which are in the process of being secured. The five scenes operate in spatial terms, conveying a mental picture of the extent of the emperor's domain as well as the inevitability of its continuing expansion into

increasingly unfamiliar and distant realms. The *feng huang* introduces a highly aestheticized means of evoking borders and peripheries that was significantly more subtle than the direct representation of foreign peoples, but it reflects similar concepts of Byzantine hegemony. The birds correspond semantically to the depictions of barbarians found in late antique and early Byzantine depictions and participate in the articulation of universal rule, which was an essential facet of the ideology behind these earlier images. At the same time, they convey these ideas through an updated visual vocabulary, which operates in less literal terms by replacing depictions of actual barbarians with the emphatically foreign motif of the *feng huang*.

THE TROYES CASKET AND MIDDLE BYZANTINE IMPERIAL IDEOLOGY

The hypothesis that Macedonian era concepts of conquest and attitudes toward foreign peoples might have served as an impetus for the adoption of non-Byzantine motifs within an imperial program is supported by the attitudes and practices of the ninth- to tenth-century emperor Leo VI as well as by an emerging rhetoric of expansionism apparent in imperial encomia from the mid-tenth century. Scholars have noted the respect with which Leo regarded foreign, especially Arab, adversaries, particularly vis-à-vis their military acumen.[130] This attitude is best represented by Leo's *Taktika*, a treatise on military warfare in which the emperor recounts the strength and cunning of Arab armies and advises on the best ways to counteract their strategies.[131] Furthermore, the increased status of Muslim ambassadors and prisoners at the middle Byzantine court is indicated by their absence from the protocol lists for court ceremonial of 830–40 versus their prominent place in the lists of the early tenth century, which were revised during Leo's rule.[132] These lists prescribe the participation of Muslim prisoners in the Christmas and Easter imperial banquets. The emperor's image as the universal Christian king was conveyed by dressing Muslim hostages, who attended certain banquets in white robes, which were the garment typically worn by catechumens who were to be baptized on Holy Saturday. While the prisoners were not likely aware of the symbolic import of their costumes, the message would have been unequivocal to the banquet audience composed of Byzantine courtiers.[133] By incorporating Muslims into court ceremonies, Leo promoted himself as the ecumenical ruler of the diverse people of the world, but did so in a way that conveyed the capacity for Muslims to become Christian – and thereby Byzantine – while still making clear his own triumphal might as conqueror of foreign peoples and shepherd of the Christian flock. Leo's generosity toward his Muslim enemies may reflect his greater confidence following victories in the 890s.[134]

The images on the casket might also reflect the expansionist ethos of the Macedonian emperors during the second half of the tenth century. Emperors

of the late ninth and first half of the tenth century had been unable to pursue imperialist ambitions, and the nature of Byzantine rule described in encomia of the period reflects a set of values and virtues in keeping with a more peaceful image of imperial power.[135] Yet rhetoric – and eventually policy – under Macedonian rulers beginning with Constantine VII and continuing under John I Tzimiskes and Nikephoros II Phokas shows an increasing promotion of the Byzantine ruler as the conqueror of new territories.[136] The more militaristic and cosmopolitan image of imperial might projected by the Troyes Casket might reflect this growing association of the ruler with the conquest of new territories and exotic lands.

If projected onto the Troyes Casket, these concepts of the Macedonian emperor as a triumphant universal sovereign help account for the association of the Byzantine ruler with the Chinese *feng huang*. The theme of imperial triumph – introduced on the lid of the box – provides a consistent semantic context within which both indigenous and foreign artistic elements are united. At the same time, the alterity of foreign style and iconography contribute an essential ingredient to the particular concept of imperial power that the casket reflects, an ideology that promotes the incorporation of foreign cultures within the Byzantine *oikoumene* through military subjugation.[137] The foreign elements of the program, visually isolated at the ends of the casket, indicate that care was exercised in observing boundaries between Byzantine and "other." At the same time, these exotic motifs were aligned with the scenes on the long panels through compositional parallels and contrasts. While this work of art no doubt participates in a vogue for exotic styles and motifs at the Byzantine court, aesthetic appreciation of foreign art did not preclude semantic engagement with these sources. Especially within the ideologically charged system of imperial imagery, every element of a program was presumably intentional, reflecting the most current conception of Byzantine hegemony within the boundaries of time-honored conventions.[138]

DIPLOMATIC GIFTS: THE EXPEDIENT ESCAPE

Scholars suggest that the Troyes Casket may have functioned as a diplomatic gift to a foreign recipient.[139] The use of non-Byzantine styles and iconographies provides the basis for this interpretation; it is assumed that exotic motifs were selected to make the object accessible and appealing to a non-Byzantine viewer. This interpretation is weakened by the fact that ivory objects, caskets included, do not appear in extant listings of Byzantine diplomatic gifts.[140] Notwithstanding this reservation, the box shares various characteristics with other objects known to have been used as gifts of state. For example, purple dyed objects, especially textiles, were cited among the materials sent to Islamic courts from Byzantium.[141] A letter dated 949 from Constantine VII to

the Spanish Umayyad caliph Abd al-Rahman III (r. 912–61) was written in gold and silver ink on blue-purple parchment.[142] In the tenth century, tailored and untailored cloth taken on campaign and designated to be used as gifts to foreigners was transported in "containers encased in purple leather," recalling the hue of the Troyes Casket.[143] Foreign recipients' understanding of purple as a symbol of imperial status is attested in Islamic sources.[144]

The iconography of the Troyes Casket also recalls programs of Byzantine objects exchanged as diplomatic gifts, which employed motifs, such as the mounted king, that communicated royal authority and status across cultural divides. Constantine VII sent Abd al-Rahman III a gold and silver box that portrayed the emperor on horseback.[145] No doubt the box with Constantine's portrait was meant to mirror the message of the letter it carried, which promised military and political alliance. Indeed, official portraits of the emperor, known as *laurata*, were understood to act in the ruler's stead, as guarantors of his support.[146] The effectiveness of this image as a cross-cultural signifier was insured by the prevalence of the mounted ruler in medieval Islamic art, as evinced by countless depictions of royal riders in Spanish Umayyad, Fatimid, and eastern Islamic art.[147] The cross-culturally recognizable visual vocabulary of the equestrian king allowed the Byzantines to express themes of royal authority and prowess in a language easily comprehended by a foreign audience; in this way the royal hunt was effectively translated across cultural divides.[148]

Despite the legitimate cultural-historical context for identifying the Troyes Casket as a diplomatic gift, this suggestion must be treated with reservation because it simultaneously reflects a propensity to view Byzantine art as an exclusive system, one that was unyielding to foreign artistic impact. Interpreting the Troyes Casket as a diplomatic gift perpetuates a myth of Byzantine cultural hermeticism by implying that, while Byzantium was cosmopolitan enough to be aware of exotic artistic forms and skilled enough to imitate them, true Byzantine art was impervious to foreign "influence" and employed non-Byzantine motifs for the sole purpose of communicating with foreign audiences. On a deeper level, the diplomatic-gift model may betray a scholarly bias that views foreign ruptures within Byzantine art to be tainted by iconoclast associations and therefore anathema to subsequent iconophile dynasties.[149] Viewing the Troyes Casket as a diplomatic gift provides an easy escape from this dilemma: the object is free to depict iconography that is supposed to be otherwise unacceptable within middle Byzantine imperial art. It implies that the need to communicate effectively with a non-Byzantine audience overrode any undesirable Iconoclast association that foreign motifs might have possessed.

Yet as argued above, space did exist within middle Byzantine imperial ideology not only to accommodate but also to embrace both foreign and Iconoclast artistic sources. Although available evidence cannot definitively establish whether

the box served as a diplomatic gift or circulated within Byzantium exclusively, it does indicate that both these functions were possible during the Macedonian era. The presence of foreign iconography did not preclude Byzantine consumption. Rather, exotic motifs could play an essential role in picturing middle Byzantine imperial ideology. For these reasons, the Troyes Casket and the imperial image it presents need not – indeed should not – be limited to a non-Byzantine audience.

If understood as a diplomatic gift, the Troyes Casket demonstrates the ability and desire to communicate Byzantine royal ideology through a visual language legible to a foreign viewer. If produced for domestic use, the casket recognizes that foreign and Iconoclast iconographies and styles possessed authority in the internal expression of middle Byzantine imperial triumph. The latter suggestion is laden with the heavy burden of challenging an age-old perception of the middle Byzantine imperial image as exclusive and conservative. But this reading finds substantial support in tenth-century texts – which recognize the role that both foreign cultures and Iconoclast forerunners could play in Macedonian imperial ideals – and in the scholarly consensus regarding the innovative and evolving character of imperial ideologies throughout Byzantine history. The audience for this message of royal power would have been the court elite, perhaps especially the members of its military and administrative branches, who aided the emperor in managing his territories and securing their borders. Much as the ninth-century Byzantine court had been a crossroads for exotic objects and visitors, the tenth-century palace continued to accept diplomatic emissaries and house high-ranking foreign prisoners as well as receive exotic objects that traversed the medieval world as trade goods and gifts. Byzantine courtiers would have been well versed in foreign visual sources and able to navigate effectively programs that incorporated exotic motifs and styles.

The imperial image manifest in the Troyes Casket is rooted in Macedonian strategies that sought precedent in earlier authoritative texts and images of Byzantine military and political hegemony, which included not only Roman-Byzantine models but Iconoclast ones as well. The artistic realization of this ideology is hybrid, reflecting an eclectic assortment of styles and iconographies. The appropriation of the medieval Chinese motif of the *feng huang* and its strategic juxtaposition with Roman-Byzantine images of the imperial hunt and triumph generates meaning from the friction between these seemingly unrelated iconographies. But the message the object conveys is semantically unified: diverse artistic traditions are drawn together to articulate a coherent expression of Byzantine universal rule.

CHAPTER THREE

PARITY

Crafting a Byzantine-Islamic Community of Kings

The use of the Troyes casket as a diplomatic gift would propel the object into a cross-cultural political domain that was vibrant in the Middle Ages. The Byzantine court maintained a dynamic network of contacts with a diverse range of allies and antagonists, and the objects exchanged in the rituals of state receptions played an active role in articulating the relative status of the participants as well as their aspirations for the outcomes of their negotiations. Evidence of these interactions is found in texts produced in Byzantium as well as at other courts of the medieval era. An eleventh-century Arabic text, *Kitab Hadaya wa al-Tuhaf* (*The Book of Gifts and Rarities*), offers unusually rich documentation of the material culture of diplomatic exchange.[1] Attributed to the Fatimid courtier al-Qadi al-Rashid Ibn al-Zubayr, the text contains 414 paragraphs that detail a vast array of spectacular medieval objects and marvels.[2] Twenty-one entries pertain to interactions between Byzantium and Sasanian or medieval Islamic courts, and the objects involved in these exchanges are described in relative detail.[3] Although mention of diplomatic gift giving is not unusual in medieval texts, it is rare to find detailed descriptions of the items exchanged. *The Book of Gifts* therefore contributes essential information regarding the kinds of things that passed between medieval potentates.

The objects are, as would be expected, precious and exceptional. Made from the most expensive materials available – gold, gems, rock crystal, silk, rare woods – they typically demonstrate an accretion of valuable substances, for example, silver, gold, or rock-crystal vessels encrusted with priceless stones, or

fine silks and brocades interwoven with gold thread. Expert craftsmanship is frequently mentioned as a further mark of an object's worth. Their decorations typically draw from a repertoire of shared cultural references, including imagery indicative of abundance and power, rare or mythological animals, flowers and vegetal designs, and mounted royal figures. Yet in some instances, the gifts deploy more specific references to power and authority that were common to Islamic and Byzantine groups. Two records of items exchanged between Byzantine and Islamic rulers in the tenth to eleventh centuries – one a saddle of Alexander the Great purportedly presented by the Byzantine emperor to the Fatimid caliph, the other a vest with a gem-encrusted Seal of Solomon purportedly given to the Byzantine emperor by a Seljuq Sultan – illustrate the ways in which such objects could build upon shared systems of meaning in order to convey messages of common cause and even common identity. In contrast to the objects and monuments discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, which were intended to convey Byzantine superiority over foreign adversaries, the saddle of Alexander the Great and vest with the Seal of Solomon attest to the possibility of parity between Byzantine and foreign rulers, who might, in specific situations, position themselves as friends or even brothers within an international community of medieval kings.[4]

DIPLOMATIC GIFTS IN MEDIEVAL COURTS

The artistic culture shared by Byzantine and Islamic courts was not limited to the iconographic and stylistic features of diplomatic gifts, but extended to parallels in ceremonial practice as well. Despite differences in creed and mutual alienation as a result of frequent military confrontation, Byzantines and Muslims observed similar court rituals. Comparable processions, appearances, and protocol can be documented at the Byzantine court in Constantinople, the Fatimid court at Cairo, the Spanish Umayyad court at Cordoba, and the Abbasid court at Baghdad.[5] Similar court practices meant that precious objects – such as elaborate wall hangings or exquisite beakers and bowls – could be similarly employed in both Byzantine and Islamic milieus and may have been given in anticipation of their use in the receiving group's palace ceremonies. As Oleg Grabar observes, the *The Book of Gifts* serves as a key to understanding the "anthropology" of medieval objects; he describes the gifts "as active ingredients in the fabric of daily or ceremonial life or as carriers of real or contrived memories."[6]

Still, various challenges complicate efforts to link the objects and attitudes found in *The Book of Gifts* and other records of medieval diplomatic gift exchange with preserved works of art or specific contexts of function and use. Some extant objects attest to medieval practices through inscriptions that provide the names and titles of giver and receiver as well as the date when the

gift was made.[7] Objects such as these inspire confidence in the notion that gifts functioned with a degree of specificity, conveying messages through both words and images that were particular to the relationship between benefactor and recipient.[8] But in the absence of epigraphic reference to a particular context of exchange, it is nearly impossible to demonstrate that an extant object was employed as a gift, let alone that it is the same work of art described in a text like the *The Book of Gifts*. In part this is because the descriptions are not sufficiently precise, but it is also due to the paucity of comparable extant medieval material and the statistical unlikelihood of the survival of specific objects. Furthermore, the author's descriptions are not always based on first-hand observation but instead summarize reports from third-party eyewitnesses, introducing additional distance between actual works of art and the objects described in the text.

In the absence of preserved examples of the specific items cited in *The Book of Gifts*, scholars correlate them with extant objects from equivalent categories of artistic media.[9] But while this approach serves the purpose of illustration, making tangible the otherwise abstract lists of countless textiles, rock-crystal vessels, gold containers, and enamel jewelry, it does little to illuminate the broader social contexts within which gift exchange took place, nor does it reveal the impact that this cross-cultural artistic interaction exercised on participating groups. Furthermore, by treating individual objects as representative of categories, rather than as unique works of art, scholars risk discounting the potential specificity of the individual things exchanged as gifts.

In an effort to expand investigation beyond mere lists of analogous precious objects, Anthony Cutler has situated these works of art and their circumstances of exchange within broader historical contexts so as to demonstrate the larger reality of Byzantine-Islamic interaction.[10] Interpreting diplomatic gifts as indicators of royal luxury and opulence, he focuses on their material value, particularly that of raw, natural substances such as balsam and aloe wood. He argues that these presents respond to the recipients' desires for exotic and difficult-to-obtain substances and anticipate expectations for the marvelous and the rare. He positions gifts as cross-culturally recognizable indices of economic strength.[11] His approach intentionally relocates the discussion of gifts outside Maussian anthropological theory, which views gift exchange as a largely symbolic process through which social and spiritual bonds between giver and receiver are engineered and guaranteed.[12]

The present discussion offers a different perspective on Byzantine-Islamic gift exchange, proposing that some gifts articulated power dynamics between giver and receiver through objects and symbols that evoked mutually recognized indices of royal authority.[13] I consider select entries that describe gifts exchanged between Byzantine and Islamic rulers in the tenth and eleventh centuries, culminating in close scrutiny of two objects that reference specific

medieval royal exemplars: a saddle of the ancient Greek king Alexander the Great, and a vest decorated with a seal of the Old Testament king Solomon. I view these gifts through the lens of concrete social meanings shared by Byzantine and Islamic cultures. I argue that the objects served to articulate the parameters and hierarchy of a community of kings to which giver and receiver belonged.[14] My approach resonates with Robin Cormack's view of diplomatic gift exchange: "Since the setting of diplomacy in which the exchange of gifts takes place is one with a facade of friendship and common values, art can act in it to claim that top people between cultures speak a common symbolic language."[15]

The idea that the Byzantine and medieval Islamic worlds possessed common artistic cultures and systems of meaning is certainly not new. But the present approach explores less charted territory by considering the potential for *specific* meanings to travel with these objects across cultural boundaries and by proposing that the symbolic message of a gift could serve as a primary aspect of its value. I suggest that these objects offer access to a semantic network that transgressed cultural divides and bespeak a realm of shared meaning that is otherwise elusive. They communicated an attitude of cultural parity, which served as the foundation for diplomatic negotiations.

By reaffirming the role of gifts as articulators of social relationships and guarantors of social bonds, I return in some respects to the approach embodied by Marcel Mauss and his amenders.[16] Mauss's framework is, however, specific to the "tribal" or "archaic" cultures that he studied, which in many respects do not parallel the circumstances of the medieval world.[17] Furthermore Mauss's approach is difficult to apply to a cross-cultural context in which the participants do not follow a common social protocol. Among other effects, I believe the potential discrepancy in "rules" between medieval Islamic and Byzantine groups led to a looser bond of obligation between giver and receiver as well as a greater potential for ambiguity – and even intentional ambiguity – in the messages these gifts were intended to convey. Rather than fitting a predetermined ritual or reaffirming an already existent social order, diplomatic gifts exchanged between Byzantine and Islamic groups served as vehicles for the constant negotiation of new relationships and for the crafting of novel messages.

CONSTANTINE VII AND *DE ADMINISTRANDO IMPERIO*

Before turning to specific instances of exchange in *The Book of Gifts*, it is useful to consider from a broader perspective Byzantine diplomatic practices that informed gift giving and the objects that circulated by these means, thereby providing a fuller context within which to situate the saddle of Alexander and vest with the Seal of Solomon. The tenth-century

treatise on government, *De Administrando Imperio*, attributed to the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennitos (r. 945–59), was written to guide his son and heir, Romanos II, in the management of the empire.[18] An idea of how gifts functioned within larger diplomatic goals can be gleaned from several sections of the text that advise on the management of foreign rulers and the role gifts should play in these negotiations.[19]

In the opening paragraph, Constantine explains to his son how to cope with foreign rulers' "insatiate temper and.... [that which] they demand inordinately."[20] Constantine states clearly the restrictions on diplomatic gifts. Although foreign leaders may request Byzantine crowns and robes of state, the secrets for the manufacture of Greek fire, or the hand of a "purple-born" princess, none of these national resources is to be ceded. The exclusion of Greek fire is obvious; the weapon gave the Byzantines a significant advantage in battle, particularly at sea, and any compromise of this superiority would have been strategically ill advised. Byzantine crowns and imperial clothing were essential symbols of Byzantine authority and, if worn by anyone other than the emperor, could have been construed as signs of Byzantine weakness or even subservience to a client state, a message that obviously countered their interests. And purple-born princesses could produce offspring who held claims to the Byzantine throne. The confinement of imperial women to the empire, if not to the palace itself, would have been an important means of checking potential rivals.[21] The restriction of these national resources indicates that diplomatic gifts were regulated to ensure that they did not cede to the recipient any advantage, real or symbolic, over the Byzantine emperor.

As Constantine notes, foreign rulers, particularly the barbarians of the north, possess insatiable desires that cannot and should not be appeased. He states, "Now these Pechenegs, who are ravenous and keenly covetous of articles rare among them, are shameless in their demands for generous gifts [ξενάλια], the hostages demanding this for themselves and that for their wives, and the escort something for their own troubles."[22] Rather than satisfying these desires, Constantine advises limiting access to rarities in order to check these grasping foreigners. He offers explicit instruction for how demands like those of the Pechenegs should be managed:

> Know therefore that all the tribes of the north have, as if it were implanted in them by nature, a ravening greed of money, never satiated, and so they demand everything and hanker after everything and have desires that know no limit or circumscription.... And so these importunate demands and brazenly submitted claims must be turned back and rebutted by plausible speeches and prudent and clever excuses.[23]

Constantine suggests certain white lies that may be offered to foreign dignitaries in response to their requests for "inalienable" treasures.[24] These excuses claim the emperor to be sworn by an oath to God not to dispense these

guarded items, and that transgression of this promise will bring divine wrath upon the empire.[25] Rather than aiming to fulfill the desires of foreign potentates, Byzantine diplomatic gifts were designed to manipulate foreign powers to serve Byzantine interests.

A primary goal that gifts might serve within political negotiations was to preserve peace by securing friendship with foreign potentates. Regarding the Pechenegs, Constantine states,

> It is always greatly to the advantage of the emperor of the Romans....to keep the peace with the nation of the Pechenegs and to conclude conventions and treaties of friendship with them and to send every year to them from our side a diplomatic agent with presents [ξενίων] befitting and suitable to that nation, and to take from their side sureties, that is hostages and a diplomatic agent, who....shall enjoy all imperial benefits and gifts [φιλοτιμιῶν] suitable for the emperor to bestow.[26]

As Constantine explains, gifts helped garner friendship and peace with foreign powers, especially when such relationships were believed to bolster a Byzantine advantage. In a subsequent passage, Constantine makes clear the benefit that such relationships might serve: "For the Pechenegs, if they are leagued in friendship with the emperor and won over by him through letters and gifts [δώρων], can easily come upon the Russians and the Turks, and enslave their women and children and ravage their country."[27] Gifts figured prominently in Byzantine diplomacy, serving, among other purposes, as a means to secure alliance with foreign powers against mutual enemies.

In contrast to foreigners who eagerly comply with requests accompanied by gifts, Constantine portrays the Byzantines as immune to the near-bribery implied by this "winning over" of political friendship. He relates that a Saracen (Arab) leader, Soldan, attempted to induce a Byzantine diplomat to treachery. Beseeching the agent to mislead a besieged city into thinking that they had been abandoned by the emperor when in fact imperial troops were on their way, Soldan purportedly said, "If you do what I tell you, you shall be awarded freedom and very great gifts [δωρεῶν]; but if not, you shall lose your life and your death shall be cruel."[28] The loyal agent sacrificed himself for his people, warning the city not to capitulate to the siege because imperial aid was approaching. The agent was killed by the Saracens, but by resisting their gifts and "friendship," he demonstrated the superiority of the Byzantines over avaricious barbarians. In sum, Constantine VII sees gifts as a means to control political alliances by manipulating the desires of allies and adversaries, yet he implies through the story of Soldan that Byzantines are immune to such temptation and exploitation.

Constantine also makes reference to the need for gifts to be "befitting and suitable" to the receiving nation.[29] In this sense, gifts of state may be understood to articulate the particular status of the receiving group in the eyes of the

Byzantines and in relation to other "friends" of the empire. A related statement of cross-culture social hierarchy is found in the discrepancy in size of gold seals used in imperial correspondences. A well-known passage in the tenth-century manual for Byzantine court ritual, the *Book of Ceremonies*, specifies the weight of the gold seal used to secure correspondences with the Abbasid caliph at four times that of the gold seal used in correspondences with the pope in Rome.[30] The Byzantines' preoccupation with the suitability of gifts indicates that they were keenly aware of the power of things to convey the status of the recipient. Gifts had the capacity to carry meaning that extended beyond the material worth of the object, but this value was generated only in the process of exchange between giver and receiver.[31] In the case of Byzantine-Islamic gift exchange, it is plausible that the Byzantines would have used diplomatic gifts as a means to intimate their reckoning of the receiving group's status vis-à-vis other Islamic polities.

The Byzantines conceived of the Muslim world as composed of separate peoples, united by a single religion and early history, but of independent and at times even conflicting military and political aspirations. In *De Administrando Imperio*, Constantine VII acknowledges the Abbasids, Fatimids, and Umayyads as three separate nations:

> There are three commanders of the faithful in the whole of Syria, that is, in the empire of the Arabs, the first of whom has his seat at Baghdad [the Abbasids] and is of the family of Maouameth, or Mahomet; the second has his seat in Africa, and is of the family of Alim and Fatime, daughter of Mouameth or Mahomet, whence the Fatemites [Fatimids] are so called; the third has his seat in Spain [the Umayyads], and he is of the family of Mauias.[32]

Constantine also mentions past confrontations between different Islamic polities. For example, the weakness of the Abbasids and the religious schism of "the family of Alim" (i.e., the Fatimids) are cited as the reasons for the declaration of independence by the "emir of Arabia Felix" (i.e., the caliph of Fatimid Egypt).[33] It seems likely that he intended for the future emperor to note these antipathies and use them to the Byzantines' advantage in positioning themselves among Islamic political and military powers. In such practices, the gifts given and received in diplomatic exchanges would have expressed messages related to the Byzantine negotiation of power dynamics among different Muslim groups.

AMBIGUITY IN GIFT EXCHANGE

An inevitable challenge to Byzantine-Islamic gift exchange – both in the medieval period and for scholars studying this phenomenon today – is the incongruity of cultural systems within which participants operated. The fact that

cultural differences might give rise to misunderstanding is no surprise. Still, to imagine medieval Byzantine and Islamic rulers and their delegates confusedly muddling through the ambiguity inherent in intercultural communications would sorely underestimate the sophistication and shrewdness of these groups. Byzantine and Islamic texts indicate that while misunderstanding certainly arose as a result of cultural difference, the polysemous potential of ambiguity was also used strategically. Diversity of meaning could be engineered to benefit giver or recipient; ambiguity was an accepted and perhaps even expected aspect of medieval diplomatic exchange.

The eleventh-century Byzantine courtier and man of letters Michael Psellos (1018–ca. 1081), for example, boasted of his ability to make double entendres in letters that the emperor commissioned him to draft to the Fatimids:

> Many a time the emperor entrusted to me secret dispatches and ordered me to write them for him (he recognized my patriotism and my love for the Romans [i.e., Byzantines]), suggesting that I should voluntarily humiliate himself and glorify the Egyptian [i.e., the Fatimid caliph]. Nevertheless, I conveyed exactly the opposite impression by subtle allusion: what I wrote had one meaning for Constantine and another for the Sultan [i.e., the Fatimid caliph].[34]

That such equivocation could be problematic is evident from the fact that the emperor discontinued Psellos's service in this capacity: "I had sly digs at the latter [the caliph] and hurt his dignity without being too overt. And that is why letters to the Egyptian were in future dictated by the emperor himself, my own efforts being ambiguous."[35]

On the other hand, ambiguity and misunderstanding in diplomatic exchange are balanced by evidence of Byzantines' and Muslims' mutual efforts to comprehend each other. By at least the tenth century, both groups took keen interest in each other's history, culture, and current affairs. In *De Administrando Imperio*, Constantine speaks to his son of the need to know "of the differences between other nations, their origins and customs and manner of life, and the position and climate of the land they dwell in, and its geographical description and measurement."[36] This statement is followed by nine chapters devoted to the history of the establishment of Islam under Muhammad and the character of different Islamic polities. Such knowledge would have been of great use not only in military maneuvers but also in designing gifts appropriate to different groups and in the successful interpretation of the possible meaning of gifts received from foreign rulers.

Diplomatic gifts typically deployed neutral imagery indicative of wealth and power: Rare or mythological animals, flowers and vegetal designs, and figures of mounted rulers. André Grabar contends that the ease with which "ornamental" motifs can be separated from their original meanings aided in their adoption by new cultures in which these iconographies lost their earlier

significances and operated on a purely decorative level.[37] Robin Cormack posits that an "international," generic iconography is particularly well-suited to gifts of state because it "fits well into the visual language of diplomatic objects."[38] It must be noted, however, that the generic character of "international" visual and material languages does not automatically render these motifs neutral. Through strategic inflection, such imagery could communicate specific messages.[39] Much as Psellos boasted of his double entendres in written correspondences with foreign rulers, diplomatic gifts might be expected to make use of visual languages that could express different meanings to different audiences, or convey a range of possible messages without full commitment to any one. Within these cross-cultural circumstances, meaning is generated from the balance between generic and specific visual vocabularies. Successful communication is dependent on the viewer's access to an array of potential associations for the objects and imagery in question.

PURPLE CLOTH AND *LAURATA*

In some instances, specific characteristics of gifts point to particular meanings that depended on the contemporary political situations of the giving and receiving cultures as well as on each participant's ability to read the visual and material language of the other. These examples support the notion that the dynamics of cross-cultural exchange and communication evident in the objects evoking Alexander and Solomon in *The Book of Gifts* are reflective of broader practices of Byzantine and medieval Islamic gift giving.

Paragraph 73 of *The Book of Gifts* describes the arrival of a Byzantine embassy laden with gifts, which was sent in 938 by Romanos I Lekapenos (r. 920–44) to the Abbasid caliph al-Radi (r. 934–40) at Baghdad.[40] Ibn al-Zubayr's description of the objects is purportedly extracted from Romanos's letter – written in both Greek and Arabic, with the former characters rendered in gold and the latter in silver – which catalogued the numerous presents: objects of gold and precious stones, rock crystal encrusted with pearls and gems, and silks. In all, fourteen vessels of precious materials, four gem-studded boxes, seven highly ornate knives, one richly decorated battle ax, four pelts, and over a hundred pieces of fine fabric and clothing were given. In the descriptions, attention is paid to the quality of workmanship as a sign of value. Objects are decorated with royal hunters and riders, flowers, trees, lions, peacocks, eagles, elephants, and other animals. That the gifts were intended to flatter the Abbasids as world powers on par with the Byzantines is suggested by the opening of Romanos's letter to al-Radi: "We have sent to your sublime eminent lineage some fine articles that reveal our deep affection and [our] sincere inclination to win your fraternity."[41] Through both objects and words, Romanos acknowledged the Abbasid potentate's membership in a brotherhood of wealthy and powerful rulers.[42]

Beyond the general opulence of the objects given to al-Radi, certain features of the gifts may have expressed more specific notions of the perception of the recipient's status vis-à-vis the Byzantine court. The comment that several of the cloaks were made of *siqlatun* cloth is significant because this fabric was commonly scarlet.[43] Ten pieces of cloth in the gift from Romanos to al-Radi are explicitly made of "red *siqlatun*," while other pieces of fabric and items of clothing are identified as "violet-colored."[44] As discussed in Chapter 2, red and purple dyes were closely regulated. The most precious were manufactured from *murex*, a shellfish whose body was crushed to yield the prized pigments. The dye, which was difficult and costly to produce, was reserved for the exclusive use of the emperor.[45] In the tenth-century *Book of the Eparch*, a code for the regulation of the markets in Constantinople, the sale of purple silks to foreigners is prohibited, and the extensive regulations surrounding the production and dispersal of purple dye and fabrics are enumerated. Of the five shades of purple described in the *Book of the Eparch*, only one of those hues, a pale purple used in robes of low-level courtiers, was produced outside imperial factories.[46] Enforcement of these regulations is apparent in the well-known account by Liutprand of Cremona (920–ca. 972). A Western European emissary, Liutprand was sent on four delegations to the Byzantine court between the years 949 and 971. During his first visit in 949, Constantine VII gave him a large cloak from the imperial treasury as well as an imperial dispensation allowing him to export purple textiles. But on his third trip to Constantinople in 968, during the reign of Nikephoros II, when Liutprand attempted to remove a quantity of purple cloth he had acquired from Venetian and Amalfian merchants, he was forced to surrender the cloth to Byzantine officials, an embarrassment he railed about at length.[47]

In sum, it is significant that cloth of this color range would be given to al-Radi, a foreign ruler, because purple and red cloth was typically limited to garments of the emperor and the elite ranks of Byzantine courtiers.[48] Muslim visitors to Constantinople were aware of the special significance of purple cloth at the Byzantine court. The tenth-century Arab prisoner at the Byzantine capital, Harun ibn Yahya, made special note of the purple hue of garments worn by courtiers on parade in imperial ceremonies.[49]

Here we meet with ambiguity. Does the gift place the Abbasid caliph on par with the emperor, recognizing him as a brother in accordance with sentiments expressed in Romanos' letter, "we have sent to your sublime eminent lineage some fine articles that reveal our deep affection and [our] sincere inclination to win your fraternity"?[50] Or was the gift intended as a sign of favor, but one that implied the Abbasid caliph's subservience to the emperor, much as members of the Byzantine court were given red cloth and clothing as gifts, demonstrating both imperial favor and the recipient's servitude? Perhaps the most accurate interpretation is to appreciate that the gift vacillated between these

possibilities, its final meaning to be decided in tandem with the outcome of the diplomatic mission within which the gift had been exchanged.

Other objects of potentially ambiguous meaning include several textiles with images of rulers and an inscription with the name of Emperor Romanos I: a piece of thin green brocade "with a representation of a riding king with a flag in his hand.…ten large velvet cloaks.…[one] of *siqlatun* that has inside its borders figures of a riding king.…[and] a silver case for several beakers, inlaid with precious stones and inscribed on the mouth, 'O God, glorify Emperor Romanos.'"[51] Scholars argue that silks depicting images of emperors, either named or anonymous, were intended to function as *laurata*, surrogates of the ruler that validated actions or agreements made in his name.[52] In the case of the gifts to al-Radi, this would suggest that objects with imperial images were intended to act as a further overture of alliance. The presentation of images of the emperor to Muslim rulers is also attested in the record of a gift from Constantine VII to the Umayyad caliph Abd al-Rahman (r. 912–61) in 949. In this instance, a gold and silver box with an enamel portrait of Constantine VII held letters written in gold and silver ink on blue-dyed parchment. As a container for the imperial word, this box would have served as the centerpiece of the gift assemblage.[53] No doubt the object itself was meant to mirror the message of the text that it carried, which promised military and political alliance.

Al-Radi's response to Romanos (paragraph 74) shows the potential for ambiguity in the interpretation of diplomatic gifts: Expensive presents might be interpreted as bribes.[54] Al-Radi's letter to Romanos states, "The Commander of the Faithful has complied with what you [Romanos] have anticipated from your gift and has provided the envoy with what has poured out of your provisions, so as to safeguard you from shyness [modesty, humbleness] and to prove yourself to be above opportunism."[55] Al-Radi's response shows that a diplomatic gift was not fixed in its meaning; what was purportedly intended as a gesture of "affection" and "fraternity" could be easily construed – or revealed – as a thinly veiled bribe, an act of "opportunism." As a result of the incongruous social systems between which Romanos's gift traveled, the objects it contained – particularly the red-purple textiles, the images of anonymous kings, and the case inscribed with Romanos's name – did not express a fixed message and were open to varied interpretation.

It must be remembered, of course, that these objects played a part in a diplomatic mission. Consideration of the historical events surrounding the exchange implies a more specific range of possibilities for the intended meaning of the gifts. The presents were accompanied by a written request for a peace treaty and the return of prisoners. That the Byzantines were in need of the Abbasids' goodwill is evident from the political and military situation of the empire during this period. An independent Islamic polity, the Hamdanids (ca. 868–1015), who were loosely retained under Abbasid suzerainty, had attacked

the Byzantines from a stronghold in northern Mesopotamia.[56] Led by the emir of Mosul and Aleppo, Sayf al-Dawla (r. 945–67), the Hamdanids had compromised the Byzantine military position such that Romanos was forced to seek a truce with the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad and with the Ikhshidid leader in Egypt in order to free himself to focus all efforts against the Hamdanids.[57] In 938, the balance of power tipped in favor of the Hamdanids, who defeated the celebrated Byzantine general John Kourkouas (d. after 946) in a battle in the Upper Euphrates region. This outcome allowed for the Hamdanids to enter Armenia and subject a number of Armenian and Iberian princes to their rule. It is within this period of Byzantine military instability that the embassy to Baghdad in 938 and the accompanying diplomatic gifts should be considered.[58]

Arriving in the midst of Abbasid and Byzantine conflicts with the Hamdanids, Romanos's gift served as an important component in mediations with the caliph for relief from the incursions of the Hamdanids, who were nominally under Abbasid rule. That the Abbasids held the upper hand in this interaction is further suggested by their rather undiplomatic, though compliant, response to the Byzantine overture for peace. The Byzantines expressed the special status of the Abbasids, not just through the abundance of precious objects included among their gifts, but also in their liberality with controlled materials, like purple- and red-dyed fabrics. The presence of a box engraved with the emperor's name as well as textiles with the image of a mounted ruler may both be understood as *laurata*, surrogates of the emperor that were intended as sureties of his allegiance. In short, these objects served as overtures of alliance with the Abbasids.

The fact that the Byzantines established separate communications with the Ikhshidids in Egypt and the Abbasids in Baghdad, as well as the fact that in both cases they requested assistance against a third Islamic group, the Hamdanids, demonstrates Byzantine participation in the complex relations among medieval Islamic polities. For the Byzantines in the tenth century, the Muslims were not a monolithic political entity. Rather, they comprised multiple groups and factions, each of whom required separate diplomatic negotiations. Recognizing through both words and objects the status of the Abbasids as supreme rulers of the Islamic world would have been a key strategy in gaining Abbasid aid against the nominally subservient Hamdanids. In this situation, the Byzantine emperor projected an image of imperial power that did not exclude his potential allies' independence.

WHITE BIRDS AND TURKISH SLAVES

In contrast to the somewhat tense interactions between Romanos and al-Radi, more amicable relations between the Fatimids and Byzantines were expressed

through diplomatic exchanges of the Byzantine emperor Constantine IX (r. 1042–55) with the Fatimid caliph al-Mustansir (r. 1036–94) in 1052–3.[59] The offering included Turkish slave boys and girls, a performing bear and hunting dogs, and an assortment of white birds: peacocks, cranes, herons, ravens, and starlings.[60] In addition, 1,700 sealed jars containing a special drink, possibly wine, were included. The liquid is valued at seven *dinars* per jar.[61]

Some Byzantine gifts to Muslim potentates show distinctive qualities that are of elusive meaning to us today, but were probably more readily comprehensible to medieval audiences. While the variety of white birds might be explained as purely aesthetic in intent, valued for their beauty and rarity, their white color might also have conveyed additional significance. For one, white was the dynastic color of the Fatimids.[62] Presenting animals of this color may therefore have been intended as a gesture of honor to the recipients. Furthermore, in both Greek and Arabic manuals for the interpretation of dreams, white clothing is identified as a symbol of joy, beauty, religious faith, and worldly success.[63] Although dream symbolism may not have been the immediate source for the interpretation of diplomatic gifts, the dream books do indicate the possibility of a shared index of meaning for the color, which could have resonated with both Byzantine and Fatimid viewers when the spectacular assortment of birds appeared in the context of a diplomatic gift. These birds, then, could have expressed a symbolic affirmation of both the recipient's and the donor's glory.

Another intriguing component of this convoy is the inclusion of Turkish slaves, both girls and boys. Slaves figure commonly in gifts exchanged between Muslims recorded in *The Book of Gifts*.[64] But slaves rarely, if ever, feature as gifts from Islamic rulers to non-Muslims.[65] Could the inclusion of Turkish slaves in Constantine's gift represent an effort on the part of the Byzantine emperor to honor the Fatimid caliph in terms that are perceived as specifically Islamic? Might Constantine have intended his gift to speak in the language of Islamic diplomacy? It may also be significant that the slaves are "Turks"; both the Fatimids and the Byzantines were engaged in military confrontations with the Turks, especially with the forces of the Great Seljuq sultan Tughrul Beg (r. 1055–63).[66] Turkish slaves given by the emperor to the Fatimid caliph in 1052–53 may have been intended to symbolize each group's desired dominance over a mutual enemy.

The purpose of Constantine IX's gift is further revealed in the next paragraph (85), in which we learn that after visiting Egypt, the emperor's envoy continued to Jaffa and Jerusalem under an escort from the Syrian navy.[67] At the Holy Sepulcher, the Byzantines delivered gifts, which included liturgical implements, church furnishings, and ecclesiastical garments. In this period, Jerusalem was controlled by the Fatimids, and under the caliph al-Hakim, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher was destroyed in 1009. After al-Hakim's death in 1024, his sister negotiated the reconstruction of the church, but the

rebuilding was not completed until the reign of Constantine IX.[68] By including an intermediate stop at the court in Egypt en route to the Holy Land, the Byzantines acknowledged Fatimid suzerainty over Jerusalem and preserved Fatimid favor in anticipation of rebuilding the Holy Sepulcher.[69] Again, the remarkable gift of a flock of white birds of varying breeds would have made an impressive gift in purely aesthetic terms, but would have been even more appropriate to the purpose of the delegation if the very color of the animals was intended – and recognized – as a gesture of honor toward the Fatimid caliph and his people, while the gift of Turkish slaves expressed the Byzantine and Fatimid common enmity for the Seljuqs. Again, the emperor employed gifts to articulate the relationship between Byzantium and the receiving group and in this way also communicated the nature of his own power.

THE SADDLE OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT

Two final entries discussed here document instances in which messages of shared interest and ideals of common kingship clearly influenced the choice of objects offered. The parity in meaning of Alexander and Solomon as model rulers in both Byzantine and Islamic traditions facilitated the retention of consistent symbolic associations across cultural boundaries. *The Book of Gifts* records a particularly large number of exchanges between the Byzantines and the Fatimids, no doubt because the author, Ibn al-Zubayr, was a Fatimid courtier. In paragraph 99 he recounts the description from "a trustworthy vizier of al-Mustansir" of four finely crafted saddles discovered in the Fatimid treasury around 1069. One of the saddles was particularly exquisite,

> made of black brocade with cast-gold sides and stirrups, entirely studded with white jasper of fine quality. Its straps were made of black leather as soft as silk. The metallic parts of the bridle were all made of gold studded as well with white jasper, and its Sudanese leather straps were of the best available kind.[70]

The striking contrast of luminous white jasper set against deep black brocade and highlighted with gold would indeed have created a breathtaking sight. Attached to this saddle was a note purportedly in the handwriting of al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah (r. 953–75), the Fatimid caliph who conquered Egypt in 969 and moved the Fatimid capital from Mahdiya, in present-day Tunisia, to Cairo in 972. The note said, "The Byzantine Emperor offered us this saddle and the bridle after we entered Egypt."[71] The "trustworthy vizier" further stated that the saddle was one of six that had belonged to Alexander the Great "and were transferred from him to the Byzantine treasury."[72]

The saddle was exceptionally crafted from rare and precious substances. Nonetheless, its primary value seems to have derived not from its material

worth, but from its symbolic import as a relic of the ancient king, Alexander. Furthermore the object's origin in the Byzantine imperial treasury vouchsafed its authenticity and supplemented its importance. This provenance echoes statements elsewhere in *The Book of Gifts* regarding the particular value ascribed to possessions of famous Sasanian and Byzantine kings that were looted from royal treasuries during the Umayyad conquests and subsequently passed to the Abbasids and later Islamic dynasties.[73] Value accrued to such objects because of their association with important rulers and prestigious courts.

Alexander the Great held particular pride of place in both Byzantine and medieval Islamic traditions. From the time of the first Byzantine emperor, Constantine I (r. 324–37), Alexander figured as a model, both positive and negative, for the Byzantine ruler. Early sources refer to him as a drunkard and a pagan, a foil to the emperor, who surpassed Alexander in all good qualities.[74] But beginning in the late ninth century, Alexander received more favorable association with virtues of bravery, skill in battle, and wisdom. His status as an ideal ruler peaked during the Komnenian dynasty in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[75] Psellos listed Alexander foremost in the category of "great leaders of men, persons renowned for their characters and their words and deeds."[76] The first Greek king to conquer Persia, Alexander provided a model for eastward military expansion. This aspect of his identity may explain in part Alexander's increased popularity during the Komnenian period, when the Byzantines were desperately repelling incursions from Eastern enemies, especially the Seljuqs.

Alexander's association with horse saddles would have been emphasized by his common representation on horseback.[77] Alexander appears mounted on a middle Byzantine ivory box, the so-called Darmstadt Casket, in which he again wears the attire of a Byzantine emperor (see Figs. 37b and 44). His identity as a paradigmatic conqueror was conveyed through scenes of his ascension, when he climbed to the heavens in a chariot drawn by griffins in order to see the world from on high, a scene also depicted on the Darmstadt Casket (Fig. 38a).[78] Driven by a voracious appetite for knowledge, he overcame the physical limitations of humankind. The so-called Innsbruck plate, a twelfth-century enamel dish of disputed provenience, shows Alexander in a central medallion, ascending in his griffin-drawn chariot, and surrounded by images of courtly entertainments – musicians, dancers, acrobats, and combatant animals – in keeping with the visual vocabulary of Islamic "princely-cycle" imagery (Fig. 34). This dish is thought to have been employed as a diplomatic gift, possibly from a Byzantine emperor to the Muslim recipient, Rukn al-Dawla Abu Sulayman Da'ud (r. 1114–42), the Artuqid ruler of northern Mesopotamia, who is named in an Arabic inscription on the interior rim of the bowl.[79] A second, illegible inscription in pseudo-Persian runs along the exterior rim. As a gift exchanged between Byzantine and Muslim potentates,



34. Innsbruck Dish, Byzantine (?), first half of the twelfth century, copper gilt with cloisonné and champlevé enamel, diam. 26.5 cm, Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum, Innsbruck, inv. no. K 1036. Photo: Frischauf Bild, Innsbruck.

this object further substantiates the practice of using Alexander as a mutually significant index of royal authority.[80]

The medieval Muslim recipient also possessed an indigenous tradition through which to interpret the meaning of images of Alexander, who appeared prominently in medieval Islamic literature and folklore. Alexander was considered one of the four great rulers of antiquity and was lauded as one of the two righteous ancient kings. Within medieval Islamic history and legend, Alexander was represented as a world conqueror, whose adventures took him as far east as Tibet. The tenth-century Arab historian Tabari remarked that "Iskander [Alexander] was a man of resolute nature, of strength, and of stratagem."[81] Alexander may appear in the Qur'an (*Sura* 18) by the name Dhu al-Qarnayn, the "two-horned," a reference to a Syriac tradition of the sixth century in which Alexander says to God, "I know that thou hast

caused horns to grow upon my head, so that I may crush the kingdoms of the world with them."[82]

The primary means for the proliferation of Alexander's reputation across medieval cultural boundaries was through the vast dispersal of the Alexander Romance.[83] Although ascribed to Kallisthenes of Olynthos, the historian who traveled with Alexander on his conquests, the text was actually written by an anonymous author no later than the third century, hence its present attribution to Pseudo-Kallisthenes. It was translated and circulated throughout the medieval world from Western Europe to the Near East.[84] Alexander served, therefore, as a powerful symbolic figure in diplomatic objects exchanged between Byzantium and the Islamic world.[85] The saddle of Alexander would have made an appropriate offering from the Byzantine emperor to the Fatimid caliph al-Mu'izz, particularly at the moment when al-Mu'izz was expanding his domain eastward from Tunisia to Egypt.

The historical authenticity of this gift is undermined, however, by a second entry in *The Book of Gifts* (paragraph 98), which records that three cloisonné and gold inlaid saddles belonging to Alexander the Great were also sent in the eleventh century by a Byzantine emperor to the Fatimid caliph al-Mustansir (r. 1036–94).[86] While it is possible that duplicate relics of Alexander the Great were dispatched in the tenth and the eleventh centuries, this repetition might instead indicate that one or both stories were fabricated. Indeed, the fact that the saddles of al-Mu'izz were "discovered" during the reign of al-Mustansir may suggest their invention during al-Mustansir's rule. Yet even if the saddles from the Byzantine emperor were Fatimid inventions, the story nonetheless attests to a medieval Islamic appreciation of Alexander as a royal prototype and to a Fatimid perception of Byzantium as a source for the relics and a conduit for authority of the ancient Greek king. In other words, the Byzantines had successfully communicated their role as inheritors of Alexander so that foreign political powers recognized them as such. Recalling Grabar's observation, *The Book of Gifts* positions medieval objects as embodiments of not just real but also "contrived memories."[87]

Furthermore, each period of Fatimid history – the conquest of Egypt by Caliph al-Mu'izz in the tenth century and the long reign of Caliph al-Mustansir in the eleventh century – provides a logical context for a gift such as this to be sent from Constantinople to Cairo. Despite the fact that Byzantine-Fatimid interactions were somewhat tumultuous and frequently adversarial during the reign of al-Mu'izz, the Fatimid conquest of Ikhshidid-controlled Egypt in 969 served the interests of the Byzantines, who were, as a result, able to make advances in Syria.[88] The Ikhshidids were nominally under rule of the Abbasids, who in turn were in frequent conflict with both the Fatimids and the Byzantines. Fatimid conquest of ostensibly "Abbasid" Egypt weakened this common enemy, and it is possible that the Byzantines would have marked the event with a significant gift to the Fatimid caliph al-Mu'izz. Alternatively,

the gift might have been intended to convey an equivocal message, on the one hand commending Fatimid conquest of a common enemy, while on the other hand reiterating Byzantine inheritance of Eastern rule through Alexander and warning against Fatimid incursions into Byzantine-controlled territories, such as Antioch, that were located farther east. If the latter message was intended, the warning was not heeded. Following the capture of Egypt in 969, the Fatimids attacked Byzantine-controlled Antioch in 971. Although temporarily successful, the Fatimids were soon routed as a result of Byzantine campaigns in 974 and 975. During the reign of al-Mustansir in the eleventh century, the Byzantines and Fatimids found the urgency of their own conflicts superseded by a growing mutual enmity for the Abbasid caliphate, which was supporting Seljuq forces against both the Byzantines and Fatimids.[89] The gift of Alexander's saddle finds, therefore, a logical context for exchange in the eleventh century as well, when it could have served as encouragement for any one of numerous eastward advances into Abbasid territories that the Fatimids attempted during this period.

The identification of the Byzantine emperor as dispenser of the relics of Alexander asserts his status as the inheritor of the ancient Greek king's legacy. But by gifting the saddles, the emperor also recognized the Fatimids' prowess as great conquerors in their own right and welcomed them into a brotherhood of prodigious rulers. The parallel significance of Alexander as a model ruler in Byzantine and Islamic cultures allowed the meaning of the relic to be retained across cultural boundaries. The object would have held additional significance for the Fatimids because Alexander was purportedly buried in Alexandria, Egypt, a tradition still recounted at least as late as 943.[90] This example of engineered gift giving recalls Constantine VII's instructions in *De Administrando Imperio* that diplomatic gifts should be appropriate and befitting to the recipient.[91] The presentation of Alexander's saddle, a precious and meaning-laden relic, would have symbolically recognized Fatimid eastward expansion in the tradition of Alexander and endorsed further Fatimid advances against a common enemy, the Abbasids. As such, the gift might have served as an overture for alliance.[92] The Byzantines' use of Alexander's saddle as a means to negotiate power dynamics among Islamic groups recalls Constantine VII's advice to employ gifts as a means of befriending foreign powers in order to combat mutual enemies.[93] This was achieved through a gesture of fraternity, intimating Fatimid participation in a community of kings, who shared in the legacy of Alexander the Great.

A VEST WITH THE SEAL OF SOLOMON

A final example of gift giving occurred in the opposite direction, with an Islamic ruler offering a present to a Byzantine emperor. Ibn al-Zubayr reports that in 1057 the Great Seljuq ruler Tughrul Beg sent to the Byzantine

emperor two envoys who delivered gifts including a pearl-laden vest with an appliqué Seal of Solomon in red rubies.[94] This item was impressive for its valuable materials, its excessive weight, and most importantly its symbolic reference: In both Byzantine and Islamic cultures, Solomon was revered as a model ruler.[95]

In Byzantine art, Solomon most often appears in the company of his father, King David, particularly in images of the Anastasis, in which the two Old Testament kings figure as righteous forerunners and honored ancestors of Christ.[96] In the middle Byzantine period, the "wisdom" of Solomon motivated his adoption as an imperial exemplar. Although King David was the more commonly invoked Old Testament prototype of the Byzantine emperor, Solomon is sometimes positioned as an exegetical model for the emperor's son.[97] The mid-tenth-century Bible of Leo Sakellarios (Vatican City, Vatican, Bib. Apostolica, MS. Reg. gr. 1) shows the crowning of Solomon (fol. 285v), which is framed by an epigram that emphasizes the relationship between imperial father, David, and his royal son, Solomon: "From my loins (is) Christ of the Virgin. Rejoice, child of my inheritance wearing the glorious triumphant crown. Rejoice. Jesse watches the offspring, the wise landholder (who is) distinguished in the headband with which the seer now crowns him" (Fig. 35).[98] Robert Ousterhout demonstrates that Constantine IX Monomachos, who was responsible for the rebuilding of the Holy Sepulcher, fashioned himself as a New Solomon, builder of the New Temple in Jerusalem.[99] In the Bible, Solomon's knowledge is said to have been bestowed by God (1 Kings 4:29–34).[100] Solomon was lauded as the author of three Old Testament books: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs, which were thought to evince his wisdom.[101] Specifically, he was renowned as a just lawmaker. Shaun Tougher argues that public image of the late ninth- to early tenth-century emperor Leo VI, also known as Leo the Wise, was modeled after Solomon.[102] This was in part the result of inheritance, because Leo's father, Basil I, had used King David as a paradigm within his own imperial ideology.[103]

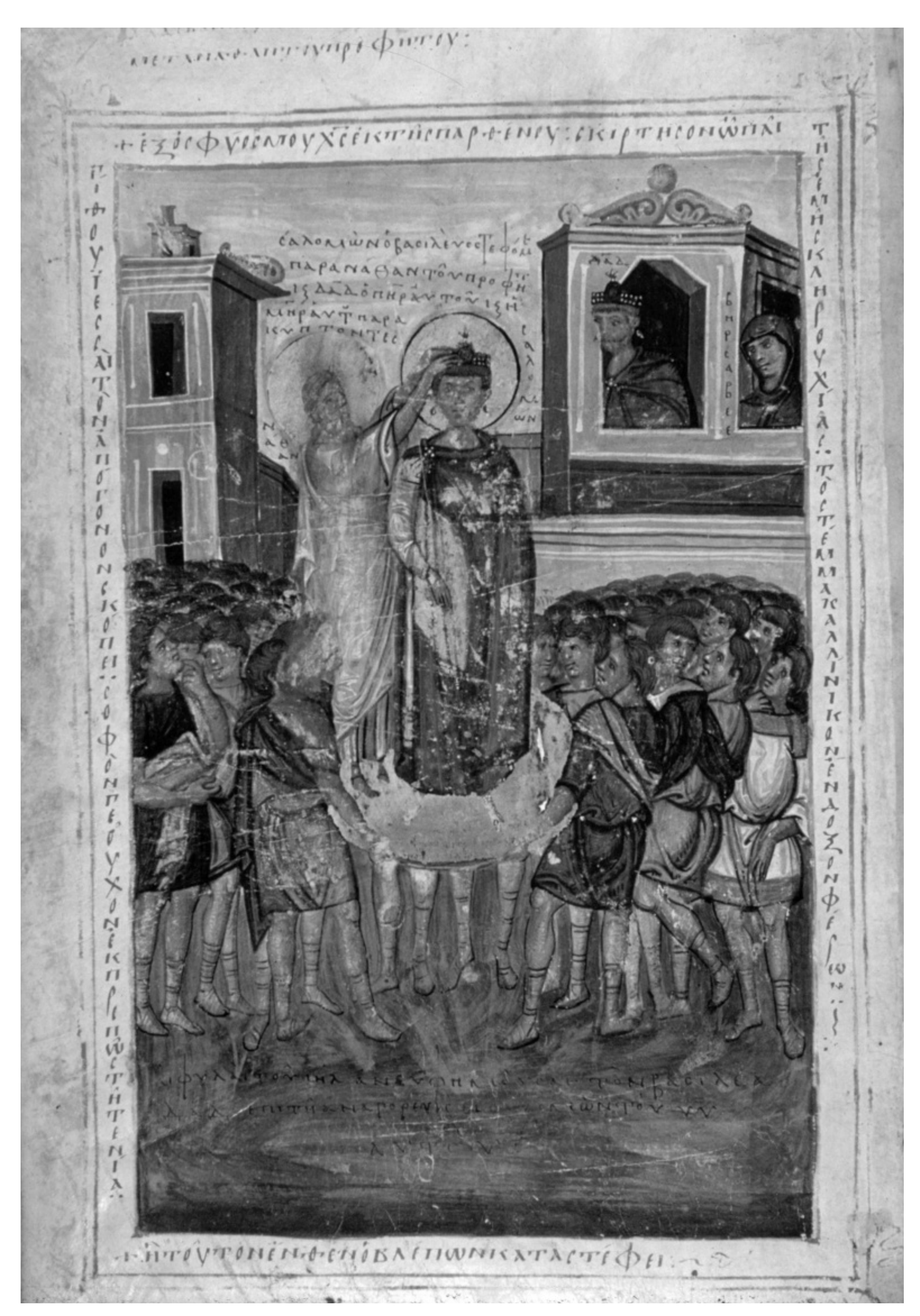
In the early Byzantine period, the story of Solomon was disseminated through *The Testament of Solomon*, a magical treatise, which, although presently extant only in fifteenth- to seventeenth-century manuscripts, is known to have circulated by at least 400.[104] In *The Testament*, Solomon is noted for his magical abilities, including the binding of demons, who were forced to labor on the construction of the Jewish Temple.[105] Solomon is said to have gained his magical powers through a ring decorated with a seal that was given to him by God via the archangel Michael.[106] This so-called *sphragis* (seal) of Solomon became a magical symbol in its own right. Taking the form of a star or a knot, it appeared on a variety of Byzantine amulets as a protective symbol.[107] A reference to *The Testament* by the late twelfth-century historian Niketas Choniates (d. 1217) attests to its continued relevance in Byzantium, but by the middle

Byzantine period, the text had come to be associated with illicit magic, and Solomon's affiliation with the occult sciences was less emphasized.[108]

The idealization of Solomon as a wise king – whose knowledge encompassed, among other realms, the medical and the magical – was similarly prevalent in the medieval Islamic world. Solomon was among the four great world rulers acknowledged by Arab historians, and he was one of two rulers revered as a "believer" before the advent of Muhammad.[109] He is mentioned frequently in the Qur'an, where he is considered a prototype of Muhammad and is celebrated as a skillful administrator and a just king.[110] As Priscilla Soucek has noted, Solomon's presence in the Qur'an lends regularity to his characteristics as they evolved throughout the Islamic world.[111] Renowned for his wisdom, Solomon's knowledge encompassed the esoteric and the occult; he was celebrated as a magician and credited with authoring Arabic treatises on magic.[112] The Islamic Solomon also possessed a magical ring inscribed with the name of God, and through this object he forced demons to labor for him on the construction of the Jewish Temple.[113] Islamic rulers throughout history invoked Solomon as a royal prototype, adopting his name and building palaces, thrones, and other regal structures that recalled the Old Testament king's precedent.[114] Members of the Seljuq royal family were given the name Sulayman (Solomon), attesting to the importance of Solomon as a royal model within Tughrul Beg's own dynasty.[115] As in the Byzantine world, Solomon's seal became an independent talismanic sign; shaped like a star, it appeared on Islamic coins beginning in the Umayyad period.[116] The symbol's association with Solomon is made explicit in a mid-thirteenth-century Islamic illustration (Istanbul, Topkapi Sarayi Museum, H.2152, fol. 97a), which depicts Solomon on a royal dais supported by lions and holding the star or seal over his chest (Fig. 36).[117] This image not only recalls the vest that Tughrul Beg presented to the Byzantine emperor, but also makes clear the powerful royal associations that the seal held.

Solomon's fame was evinced at both elite and popular levels. A genre of texts recording so-called tales of the prophets offered elaboration on the history of Jewish and Christian holy people for the edification and entertainment of a popular audience. The version by the "master storyteller" al-Kisa'i, written around 1200, includes a lengthy account of Solomon's succession to the throne of Israel; the divine origin of his rule and knowledge; his mastery over natural forces, earthly creatures, and supernatural beings; and Gabriel's delivery of the seal from God. Solomon was lauded as a king of kings and master of demons.[118] In *The Sea of Precious Virtues*, a mid-twelfth-century Persian mirror for princes, Solomon is given the title "prophet," and stories present him as a wise and pious ruler.[119]

Tughrul Beg's gift employed a symbol – the Seal of Solomon – that held specific and consistent meaning among both giving and receiving cultures.[120]



35. The crowning of Solomon, Bible of Leo Sakellarios, tenth century, pigment on vellum, 41 by 27 cm, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS. Reg. gr. 1, fol. 281r. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved © 2010 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



36. King Solomon on the Throne of Lions holding the symbol of his seal, Mesopotamia, thirteenth century, Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayi Museum, H.2152, fol. 97a.

Solomon's identity as a paradigmatic ruler was common to Byzantium and the Islamic world, and knowledge of the potency of his sign to ward off evil and empower the user was prevalent within each group. Furthermore, Solomon was a particularly appropriate reference for a diplomatic gift because he was said in *The Testament* to have received offerings from all the rulers of the world, an attribute also mentioned in Psalm 71:9–11. Indeed, beginning in at least the tenth century with the reign of Constantine VII, the Byzantine emperor received guests while sitting on the so-called throne of Solomon, an automation, which by means of hydraulics, rose to a great height and towered over the emissaries below, while bellows blew air through mechanical birds and lions that sang and roared.[121] The Western emissary to the Byzantine court, Liutprand of Cremona, describes how this throne was prepared in anticipation of the reception of foreign emissaries, including Spanish Umayyad delegates and Liutprand himself:

> Before the emperor's seat stood a tree, made of bronze gilded over, whose branches were filled with birds, also made of gilded bronze, which uttered different cries, each according to its varying species. The throne itself was so marvelously fashioned that at one moment it seemed a low structure, and at another it rose high into the air. It was of immense size and was guarded by lions, made either of bronze or of wood covered over with gold, who beat the ground with their tails and gave a dreadful roar with open mouths and quivering tongue.... At my approach the lions began to roar and the birds to cry out, each according to its kind; but I was neither terrified nor surprised, for I had previously made enquiry about all these things from people who were well acquainted with them. So after I had three times made obeisance to the emperor with my face upon the ground, I lifted my head, and behold! the man whom just before I had seen sitting on a moderately elevated seat had now changed his raiment and was sitting on the level of the ceiling; how it was done, I could not imagine, unless perhaps he was lifted up by some such sort of device as we use for raising the timbers of a wine press.[122]

In 946 the emperor Constantine VII received the Arab delegation from Tarsos while seated in this device.[123] As Tougher argues, the emperor who "sat on this throne and received foreign guests was deliberately taking the role of Solomon."[124] The emperor embodied the biblical king by performing wondrous acts and also by receiving the obeisance and gifts of emissaries from all corners of the world. Although not attested among the Seljuqs, Solomonic references were incorporated in the designs of the royal thrones and palaces of other Islamic groups, revealing a parallel practice to that of the middle Byzantine emperors.[125]

The popularity of Solomon at the Byzantine court is further demonstrated by the presence of his relics in the treasury of Hagia Sophia. In the ninth

century, a chalice of Solomon, and in the tenth century, a golden table of Solomon, were said to be held there.[126] In addition, relics of Solomon played a role in imperial displays on Christmas Day at which Muslims were sometimes in attendance. Harun ibn Yahya describes a set of trays, one of which had belonged to Solomon and the other to David, which were brought to the table of the emperor near which high-ranking Muslim prisoners were seated.[127] He notes with particular enthusiasm Solomon's tray, a reaction that suggests it may have been displayed on this occasion because it would have impressed the Muslim viewers as a statement of Byzantine inheritance of Solomon's legacy.

Relics of Solomon were also recorded in Islamic royal treasuries. A table of Solomon was said to have been discovered in a Christian palace near Toledo after the Umayyad conquest of Spain in 711. Ibn al-Zubayr described the table as made from "a blend of gold and silver, on which were three bands of pearls, rubies, and chrysolite [emerald] worth two hundred thousand dinars."[128] The table passed into the possession of the Umayyad caliph al-Walid ibn. Abd al-Malik (r. 705–15). Ibn al-Zubayr also reported two accounts of a magical mirror, purportedly given to Adam by God, which allowed the owner to see anything on the earth. This mirror eventually came into Solomon's possession and later passed to the Umayyad and, subsequently, the Abbasid treasuries. Solomon's ownership of the magical mirror enhanced its value, as did its tenure in the treasuries of famous dynasties.[129]

Through the gift of a vest with the Seal of Solomon, the Seljuqs drew upon the value ascribed to Solomon in both Islamic and Byzantine traditions. The gift flattered the Byzantine ruler by equating him with a wise and powerful royal forerunner, who had received the obeisance of foreign potentates. Presented in 1057, presumably to the Byzantine emperor Isaac I Komnenos (r. 1057–9), the vest may have been a prelude to events of 1058, when Tughrul Beg repelled Seljuq dissidents who had adopted pro-Fatimid leanings and had driven the Abbasid caliph from Baghdad.[130] Perhaps Tughrul Beg's present to the emperor factored in negotiations for a Byzantine alliance with the Seljuqs against Fatimid supporters. Although Byzantium was more or less under truce with the Fatimids at this time, the Seljuqs had persuaded the Byzantines to collude in various anti-Fatimid activities in the 1040s and 1050s, providing precedent for the gift of the vest with the Seal of Solomon to be aimed at a similar purpose. By securing cooperation from Byzantium, Tughrul Beg would have been free to pursue his opponents in Baghdad with full vigor. In fact, by 1059 Tughrul Beg had defeated the dissidents and returned the Abbasid caliph to his throne. Diplomatic gifts like the vest with the Seal of Solomon could function as integral parts of the negotiations between medieval powers, helping to establish a common ground between participants and communicating the desire to cooperate in the pursuit of shared interests.[131]

RELICS, AMULETS, AND GIFT EXCHANGE

Robin Cormack posits that art objects play a unique role in diplomatic exchange and negotiations because works of art were inherently "good gifts," as opposed to bribes. He argues that artistic gifts "circumvent (at least in part) the question of value. Whereas bribes can be adversely criticized by the recipient as too paltry, the value of art can always be felt to excel its intrinsic bullion value."[132] I hesitate to endorse Cormack's analysis because it seems predicated on modern values for works of art as primarily aesthetic objects that operate – at least in part – outside economic exchange systems. In contrast, medieval texts recording diplomatic gifts frequently note the monetary equivalent of objects that would be classified, according to contemporary categories, as "works of art."[133] Still, while the worth of the saddle of Alexander the Great or the vest with the Seal of Solomon cannot be assessed in only monetary or material terms, neither does their value stem solely from their status as works of art. Rather, these items participated in two alternate object categories of particular importance during the medieval period: relics and amulets. It is in these respects, and not as works of art, that the significance of the saddles of Alexander the Great and the vest with a Seal of Solomon moved beyond purely material value.

Patrick Geary argues that relics possessed a unique status within medieval economies. They were gifted, bought, sold, and even stolen, much as any other category of precious object. Yet their worth derived not from intrinsic material value but from their associations with individuals who possessed divine favor and thaumaturgic efficacy. Through affiliation with prosperous and powerful individuals or communities, these objects were believed to generate earthly and spiritual success and to attest to the owner's eminence.[134] *The Book of Gifts* presents a different situation at face value because the object in question – the saddle of Alexander – was certainly not a Christian relic. At the same time, through association with Alexander, it was imbued with an aura that raised the object's value beyond that of craftsmanship and media. To the extent that the saddle possessed extramaterial value through affiliation with a great personage of the past, it approaches the status of a relic: a thing esteemed and accorded special treatment because of its association with a revered individual.[135]

Relics carried profound importance at the middle Byzantine court. Both physical remains of saints (for example, John the Baptist and Saint Stephen) and objects associated with pre-Christian holy people (for example, the Rod of Moses) were kept at the Great Palace of Constantinople and factored into court ceremony and display.[136] Ioli Kalavrezou demonstrates that "relics functioned as instruments of power, investiture, and leadership, guaranteeing political authority and displaying divine approval to those who possessed them."[137] According to her interpretation, relics held at the Byzantine court

should be recognized not only as Christian sacred objects, the foci of veneration, but also as active agents in political ceremonies that recognized the emperor's authority as well as the transmission of this authority among his most trusted servants, the court elite.[138] In the same way, the relic of the saddle of Alexander the Great served to draw together the Fatimids and Byzantines as common inheritors of the ancient Greek king's legacy, recognizing their joint participation in a brotherhood of powerful rulers.

Reaffirmation of a symbolic role for the medieval gift as an articulator of social relations and obligations resonates with the culture of gift giving described by Annette Weiner in her work on the "inalienability" of sacred possessions.[139] Weiner accounts for the power of objects moving between giver and receiver in the following terms: "When we take such [sacred] possessions as a serious subject of study, teasing apart their histories and how their subjective value is constituted, we find that such possessions, as they move in time and space, become the carriers of more information and greater authority than other kinds of things. Control over their meanings and transmission from one generation to the next accords authority to their owners."[140] The power of the object extends beyond the object itself, "to my other possessions as well because my social identity, rank, or status is legitimated by my possession of one such sacred object."[141] The relics of Alexander functioned in a parallel manner. Within the Byzantine treasury, these objects accrued meaning and power not only as possessions of Alexander, but also as indicators of Byzantine inheritance of Alexander's legacy. By selecting these saddles as a gift to a Fatimid ruler, the Byzantines judged the recipient fit to share in and continue this legacy; in a sense, receipt of the saddles identified the Fatimids as perpetuators of both Alexander's and Byzantium's heritage. Possession of the relic legitimized the receiving group; the presence of this object in the Fatimid treasury enhanced the value and status of all objects in their possession.

One might argue that, by releasing the saddle of Alexander to the Fatimids, the Byzantines lost the authority of the relic's "aura." But Geary observes in examples from the medieval West that "as gifts, relics were not alienated as they would have been had they been sold or traded."[142] He notes that the pope, when dispensing holy relics, exercised authority over receiving groups; relics "thus remained the Pope's, and their recipients remained subordinate to the Pope by the ties created in the distribution."[143] Indeed, the Byzantine emperor himself played a similar role by gifting relics of the True Cross to Christian rulers throughout the medieval world.[144] Much in the way that relics of the True Cross cemented relations with Christian allies by demonstrating Byzantine control of a common cultural heritage, the saddle likewise displayed Byzantine inheritance of and power over the legacy of Alexander. Common royal exemplars created a system of shared social ideals through which emperor and caliph participated in a transcultural community of kings, despite divisions of religion

and politics. In this way, the relic of Alexander remained within a closed social group, articulating the identity of this fraternity, strengthening ties among its members, and establishing subtle distinctions of hierarchy between them.

Similarly the amuletic character of the Seal of Solomon situated the vest from Tughrul Beg in another distinct medieval object category. Like relics, apotropaic devices possessed power beyond their material worth, ensuring the security and enhancing the status of their owners. Furthermore, knowledge of and belief in these properties was predicated on a common system of beliefs.[145] Through the gift of a vest with the Seal of Solomon, the Seljuqs drew attention to a shared system of meaning, one which, by invoking a model ruler of both Byzantine and Islamic traditions, made a particularly emphatic statement of Seljuq respect for Byzantine eminence.

It is important to note, however, that nothing indicates that relics and apotropaic devices were prescribed as particularly appropriate gifts between Byzantium and Islamic groups. Rather, these instances were ad hoc efforts to establish meaningful social connections. While they parallel types of transactions from other realms of medieval reality – for example, the economy of Christian relic exchange – they are not controlled by the rules and obligations inherent in homogenous or culturally consistent societies. This should not, however, be taken to imply the objects' insignificance. Quite the contrary, the efforts at communication and connection that these gifts represent are important precisely because they indicate a concerted effort on the part of the participants to create bonds and engender meaning across divides that were constantly strained by religious, political, and historical differences. As such, these gifts provide concrete evidence of the nexus of meaning that bridged the gap between the Byzantine and Islamic worlds, evidence that is otherwise quite elusive.

This investigation of entries from the eleventh-century Arabic text *The Book of Gifts and Rarities* suggests that in at least two instances of diplomatic gift exchange, objects with cross-culturally relevant allusions to the model rulers Alexander and Solomon were used to honor the recipients and make overtures of political and military alliance. The underlying meanings of these objects point to common ideologies of the Byzantine-Islamic world and a shared symbolic language within diplomatic communications. Beyond their material and aesthetic value as works of art, each object's status as relic or amulet further enhanced their potential for articulating the giver's and receiver's participation in a medieval community of kings. Written sources do not always reveal fully the subtle ways in which concepts of power and alliance were expressed between Byzantine and medieval Islamic rulers, but diplomatic gifts can provide an essential source for deciphering the messages conveyed through these exchanges. Beyond animating contexts of interaction, these objects point to the mechanisms through which messages were communicated across cultural

divisions. The saddle of Alexander and the vest with a Seal of Solomon attest to the parity of meaning, specifically the role of ancient Greek and Jewish kings as ideal rulers within Byzantine and Islamic traditions. The mutually recognized semantic indices provided by Alexander and Solomon demonstrate that, despite their cultural differences, Byzantine and Muslim rulers used common models to position themselves in a community of kings and to express mutual recognition of each other's status within the hierarchy of this fraternity.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXPROPRIATION

Rhetorical Images of the Emperor and the Articulation of Difference

The possibility of Byzantine-Islamic cultural parity found expression in the diplomatic realm, where notions of brotherhood and common cause promoted the political interests of each group. Yet such sentiments were less prominent in Byzantine-Islamic diplomatic relations when Byzantium increasingly found itself in adversarial relationships with Islamic polities, foremost the Seljuqs, who made major advances on Byzantine territories in eastern Anatolia in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The Seljuqs established their foothold through their victory over the Byzantine city of Mantzikert in 1071 and definitively marked their westward expansion by capturing Myriokephalon in 1176 during the reign of the Komnenian dynasty (1081–1185). Byzantium's failure to resist Seljuq advances was a major factor in Byzantine alliances with Western Europeans in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, which ended catastrophically for the Byzantines when Crusader leaders diverted their armies to sack and then occupy Constantinople in 1204.[1] The loss of Byzantine territories and the growing threat of Seljuq military superiority no doubt inflected the way Byzantium conceived of itself and its ruler. The final two chapters of this book assess works of art that are dated to this period of increased Byzantine-Seljuq antagonism and reflect a more polemical attitude toward cultural others than that evinced in the objects and monuments considered thus far.

At the same time, it must be noted that in the midst of these confrontational relations, the Byzantines also periodically collaborated with the Seljuqs,

particularly when such arrangements benefitted their (or the Seljuqs') struggles against other political groups. In part because of Byzantium's inability to master international power dynamics, the Komnenian era saw increased openness to foreign cultures, both to the east and the west, as the emperors of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries attempted to maintain Byzantine prominence in the face of mounting economic and political strength among both European and Islamic competitors. For instance, starting in the twelfth century during the reign of the Komnenians, the Seljuq sultans became the first Muslim rulers to be received at the court in Constantinople.[2] The Seljuq sultan of Rum, Kılıç Arslan II (r. 1156–92) (who visited the court in 1161 to seek support after his own military failures), was generously entertained and referred to in treaties with the emperor Manuel I (r. 1143–80) as a "friend" and "son."[3] This language recalls the concept of the "family of kings" discussed in Chapter 3, but adamantly preserves a hierarchically superior position for the Byzantines. Indeed, during this state visit, Manuel maintained the upper hand, with the Seljuq Sultan performing what amounted to ceremonial submission to the emperor.[4] Furthermore, people migrated between these cultures as merchants, prisoners, diplomatic envoys, spies, and defectors; marriages were arranged between Seljuqs and Byzantines, and some individuals of Seljuq origin even entered the ranks of the Byzantine court, converting to Christianity as part of the process of assimilation.[5] While the imperial images discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 project an essentialist attitude toward the Seljuqs as enemies, the reality of Byzantine-Seljuq relations was not so simple and would have required a diversity of artistic gestures that facilitated responses appropriate to specific situations.

In this chapter I analyze an ivory box currently preserved in four separate panels at the Hessisches-Landesmuseum in Darmstadt, Germany.[6] It displays classicizing vignettes from the Greco-Roman myths of Herakles and the Roman-Byzantine epic tale of Alexander the Great with the image of a mounted rider spearing a snake, most likely Saint George (Fig. 37 and 38a). All of these scenes employ a Byzantine visual vocabulary that in several cases draws from Greco-Roman precedents. In contrast, the fourth panel departs from these artistic traditions, showing instead a medieval Islamic motif of a cross-legged figure playing a lute (Fig. 38b). This Islamicizing image is commonly cited as evidence of the "influence" of Islamic art on Byzantium.[7] In discussions of the casket, the lute player is often illustrated independently from the other panels, disassociating this scene from the physical and semantic context of the whole.[8] Perhaps as a result of this tendency to fragment the box in reproduction and interpretation, scholars commonly discuss the Darmstadt Casket in a piecemeal fashion such that the dialogue between Islamicizing and Byzantine elements remains unresolved. Instead, the exotic character of the Islamicizing panel is emphasized or marginalized in service of a given author's broader aims.



a

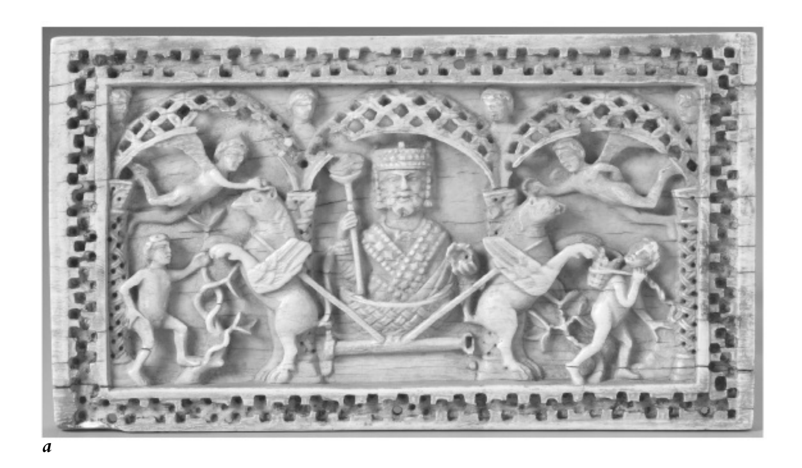
b



37 a. Front panel of a casket depicting Herakles taming the horses of Diomides, Herakles en route to Linos, and Saint George defeating the dragon, Constantinople (?), Byzantine, twelfth century, ivory, ca. 9.5 by 23.5 cm, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt, Germany, Kg 54:215a–d.

37b. Back panel of a casket depicting Alexander and an oracle, Herakles and an oracle, and Herakles coercing Auge, Constantinople (?), Byzantine, twelfth century, ivory, ca. 9.5 by 23.5 cm, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt, Germany, Kg 54:215a–d.

One reason for this interpretive fracturing is that the vignettes defy association with a single narrative account.[9] In their corpus of middle Byzantine ivory boxes, Adolph Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann declare the program to be arbitrary, motivated by decorative, rather than semantic, connections.[10] In his reappraisal of the corpus of middle Byzantine ivory carving, Anthony Cutler refers to the object as a "gallimaufry," or hodgepodge, and states that the program of the Darmstadt Casket, if one exists, demonstrates a high level of eclecticism, which lacks a parallel in middle Byzantine literature.[11] Yet, despite the resistance of the eight vignettes to classification within a single narrative account, their common framing devices suggest that they were originally conceived as a programmatic whole.[12] While the scenes do not



a

b



38a. Side panel of a casket depicting the ascension of Alexander, ca. 9.5 by 17 cm, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt, Germany, Kg 54:215a–d.

38b. Side panel of a casket depicting the assassination of Darius, Constantinople (?), Byzantine, twelfth century, ivory, ca. 9.5 by 17 cm, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt, Germany, Kg 54:215a–d.

belong to a single story, they can be identified through episodes found in literature that circulated during the middle Byzantine period. In each instance, the historical, hagiographical, and mythological figures on the box can be linked to literary texts – including imperial panegyrics and funeral orations – that celebrate these characters as models and antimodels for the Byzantine ruler. Although several of the scenes are unique within Byzantine iconography, they nonetheless demonstrate connections with types from classical and Roman-Byzantine iconographic forerunners. Furthermore, the vignettes resonate with one another through formal parallels and contrasts that cue the viewer to thematic correlations, and these compositional and organizational features are analogous to rhetorical strategies of contemporary Byzantine

literature. On these grounds, I propose that the Darmstadt Casket employs an accessible method of visual communication – rooted in literary and artistic practices of the middle Byzantine period – to communicate the virtues and vices of past rulers and heroes as models and antimodels for imperial behavior. Incorporating the Islamicizing scene into the overall discussion of the box sheds light on how both classicizing and Islamicizing elements could be negotiated within a single object and how these disparate sources could be unified under a common theme. The lute player provides a foil against which Byzantine imperial virtues were highlighted and Byzantine cultural superiority was affirmed.

A small-scale object with a complex program that draws almost exclusively from non-Christian epic and mythological narratives, the Darmstadt Casket is clearly not a work of "official" imperial art. Rather, it constructs a unique, but nonetheless decipherable, program that communicates an ambivalent message regarding imperial power and comportment. I propose that this object was not necessarily a product of the imperial office. Instead conceptual parallels between its program and contemporary panegyrics produced by courtiers and scholars support the possibility that the box was generated from the same elite social circle that penned imperial encomia. As such, the Darmstadt Casket points to the way in which nonimperial agents may have participated in the articulation of imperial power and identity.

I first consider the framing devices of the box, demonstrating how these elements cast back to antique precedents, while simultaneously anchoring the box in a middle Byzantine context. I then identify the narrative references of the eight vignettes and correlate the scenes on the Darmstadt Casket to their closest ancient and medieval iconographic parallels. Next I explain the organizing principles underlying the program of the box by relating strategies of visual rhetoric and narrative to developments in contemporary literature. Throughout these analyses of style, composition, and theme, I argue that the usual attribution of the box to the tenth century should be reconsidered, and I propose a twelfth-century date instead.[13] This redating is essential to the larger argument of this chapter, which posits that the program of the box is illuminated by the imperial ideology of the late eleventh- to twelfth-century Komnenian emperors, especially Alexios I (r. 1081–1118) and Manuel I. While I do not insist that the box was produced under direct patronage of either ruler, the object correlates well with the imperial ideologies of their reigns and, in particular, with the dominant attitude toward the Islamic world in this period. Furthermore, the Islamic motif employed on this object is not a direct appropriation of a foreign model but instead involves the transformation of this source and its strategic reconfiguration within a new Byzantine context. Such agility implies a deep familiarity with and interest in the source culture and its artistic tradition, a situation that obtained at the twelfth-century Komnenian

court. Finally I reconsider the function of the box, questioning the suggestion that it served as a diplomatic gift and arguing that its program would have been inappropriate for cross-cultural presentation. Unlike the Troyes Casket – which promoted a notion of Byzantine hegemony that potentially embraced cultural others – the Darmstadt Casket reveals a polemical and noninclusive attitude toward foreign iconography and the culture it represents. The object illustrates the manner in which contemporary medieval Islamic ruler iconography could be expropriated from its original source and reconfigured within Byzantine imperial programs to create an empowered image of the middle Byzantine emperor.

FABRIC AND FORMAT

The extremely high quality of material and facture evinced by the Darmstadt Casket supports its association with the upper echelons of Byzantine society. The box is no longer intact; its four sides are preserved as independent panels, and its lid is lost. The container is extremely small, originally measuring about 24 by 17 by 10 cm. As in the Troyes Casket, the walls of the box were fabricated from thick slabs of ivory, indicating a generous expenditure both financially and materially. The bulk of Byzantine ivory boxes were made from multiple pieces of ivory – or more often bone – affixed to a wooden core.[14] This technique of manufacture allowed for mass production and resulted in combinations of vignettes that were not preplanned iconographic programs but instead primarily decorative or loosely thematic (rather than narrative or rhetorical) combinations. In contrast, the Troyes and Darmstadt Caskets were carved from single pieces of ivory, indicating greater expense as well as conceptual and technical planning, which in turn supports the likelihood of predetermined and complex meaning for their programs.[15] The figures and their frames are carved with extraordinary skill, which is particularly evident in their liberation from the ground (see Figs. 41, 44, and 49). All the forms are carved in high relief, and some elements are rendered completely in the round. The Darmstadt Casket was executed with remarkable skill to create reliefs of impressive complexity.

Although the Darmstadt Casket depicts narrative vignettes from multiple sources, the four surviving panels share similar framing devices, which can be related to both ancient and medieval models. Around the edges of each plaque runs a checkered border, and three lattice canopies supported by braided columns organize the image fields (see Figs. 37 and 38). Busts of winged and wingless erotes are placed in the interstices of the canopies. They direct the viewer's attention toward the scenes below, and those at either side of the central canopies on the long panels offer wreaths of victory. These framing elements are not attested in any other extant middle Byzantine ivories.[16] They



39. Sarcophagus depicting the Labors of Herakles, Via Cassia, Rome, 180–90, marble, l. 217.3 cm, h. 569 cm, w. 538 cm, Museo Nazionale, Rome, inv. no. 154592. Photo: Ministero per i Beni Culturali Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma.

do, however, find parallels in Roman sarcophagi, a source in keeping with the classicizing themes of several of the vignettes. For example, a second-century sarcophagus depicts the Labors of Herakles, separated by columns and spanned by simple arches (Fig. 39).[17] Despite an obvious discrepancy in scale, the ivory box and marble sarcophagus were of essentially the same format, making quite natural the appropriation of these organizational elements. A further detail supporting the role of sarcophagi as possible models for the Darmstadt Casket is the presence in both the box and sarcophagus of erotes who offer wreaths at the interstices of the canopies.[18]

Byzantine eleventh- to twelfth-century works of art in other media show comparable framing devices, providing a body of evidence that supports dating the casket to this later period. Although no other middle Byzantine ivory box makes use of repeating columns in a fashion identical to the framing devices on the Darmstadt Casket, a comparable organizational approach is found in a twelfth-century Byzantine gilded silver cup (Fig. 40).[19] Each set of columns frames a single scene: the ascent of Alexander the Great, Samson or Herakles wrestling with a lion, a second ascension scene (possibly also of Alexander the Great), a musician with a stringed instrument, a mounted spearman, an archer on horseback, a dancer, Samson or Herakles wrestling a bull, a flautist, a foot soldier, and a second foot soldier.[20] Like the Darmstadt Casket, the cup depicts vignettes that do not derive from a single narrative. Rather, they connote courtly pastimes and heroic adventures. As such, the twelfth-century vessel offers both a visual and conceptual analogue to the Darmstadt Casket. Together, the fabric and framing devices of the box cue the viewer to the elite character of the object and its association with revered artistic models of both the antique past and the medieval present.

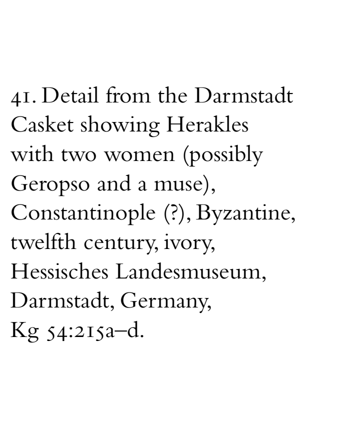


40. Bowl, Byzantine, twelfth century, gilded silver, h. 9.5 cm, The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, inv. no. W-72. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Vladimir Terebenin, Leonard Kheifets, Yuri Molodkovets.

VIGNETTES DEPICTING ALEXANDER, HERAKLES, AND SAINT GEORGE

The classicizing iconography on the Darmstadt Casket can be paralleled to a range of ancient and Byzantine works of art. Yet in no instance can a one-to-one relationship be proposed with a specific model. Still, the comparanda cited here point to the types of objects that could have served to inspire the designer of the Darmstadt Casket and suggest both a broad familiarity with a rich array of ancient and medieval visual sources as well as the willingness to adapt these models to serve the particular aims of the box's program. Four scenes on the casket depict events from the tales of Herakles, and each of these episodes is recounted in Book 2 of the second-century B.C.E. mythological handbook attributed to Apollodoros.[21] This text still circulated in the middle Byzantine period; the patriarch and bibliophile Photios includes Apollodoros in his ninth-century literary compendium, the *Bibliotheca*.[22] The Herakles scenes do not, however, follow a narrative sequence. Rather, they illustrate noncontiguous events that represent contrasting characteristics of the ancient hero. At the left side of the front panel, Herakles, clad in his characteristic attire – the skin of the Nemean lion – raises his club overhead and grabs a horse by the mane (see Fig. 37a). A second, subdued horse appears at his feet. Through comparison with antique sarcophagi, Goldschmidt and Weitzmann identify the scene as the taming of the horses of Diomedes, one of Herakles' labors.[23] On the Darmstadt Casket, this vignette has been extracted from the cycle of the hero's Twelve Labors and shown independently, while on the





41. Detail from the Darmstadt Casket showing Herakles with two women (possibly Geropso and a muse), Constantinople (?), Byzantine, twelfth century, ivory, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt, Germany, Kg 54:215a–d.

sarcophagus, the scene appears in narrative sequence with depictions of the hero's other tasks.

The next vignette is commonly interpreted as a theater scene, a reading inspired by the woman at the far right who holds a mask in her hand (Fig. 41).[24] But the figure on the left bears a striking resemblance to Herakles in terms of both hairstyle and physiognomy. He wears a philosopher's toga, which is unusual attire for Herakles, but in ancient works of art, he appears thus clothed in the company of his tutor, Linos, who taught Herakles to play the lyre.[25] An early fifth-century B.C.E. Greek vase shows Herakles en route to meet Linos. The hero is accompanied by an elderly woman, identified by inscription as the Thracian slave Geropso (Fig. 42).[26] Herakles later murdered Linos after the tutor criticized the hero for being a slow learner. The enigmatic object that Herakles holds in the Darmstadt Casket finds a possible explanation in the vignette depicted on the ancient Greek vase: The lyre carried by Geropso has a sound box – made from the shell of a tortoise – which resembles the perforated ball in Herakles' hand on the ivory box.[27] The upper part of the lyre is missing, but the Darmstadt plaques were carved in dramatically high relief, much of which has been lost, as evinced by extensive breakage. The delicate upper structure of the lyre in the Darmstadt scene would have been carved almost in the round and could easily have fractured.



42. Skyphos, Attic Greek, Pistoxenos painter, early fifth century B.C.E., clay, h 14.9 cm, diam 18.2 cm, Staatliches Museum Schwerin, inv. no. KG 708. Photo: G. Bröcker.



43. Nine Muses Sarcophagus, Roman, 240–70, dolomitic marble, l. 89.5 in, h. 28.5 in, w. 31 in, San Simeon, California, inv. no. 529–9–414. Photograph by Victoria Garagliano / © Hearst Castle ® / CA State Parks.

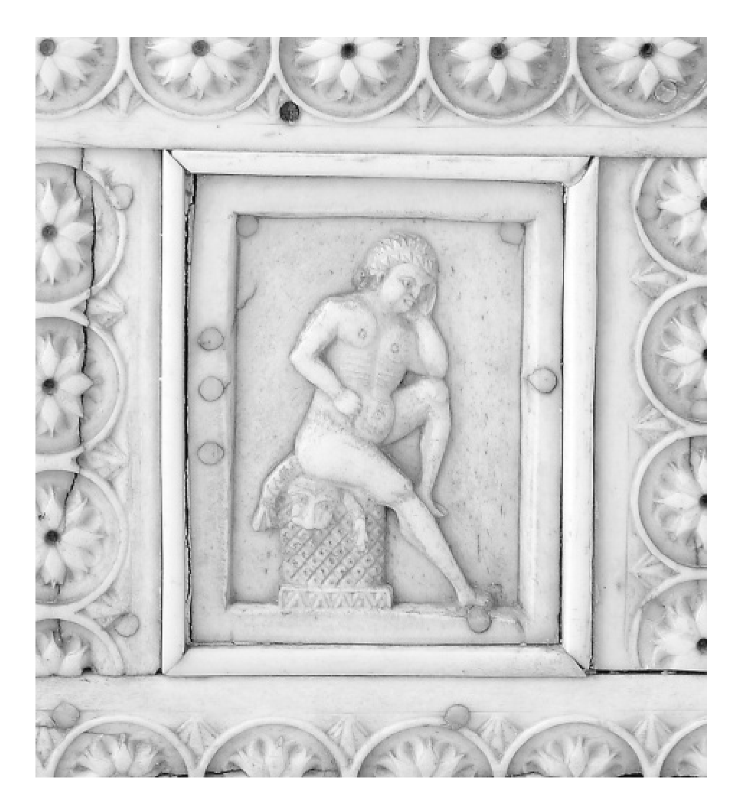
Rather than representing an actor at the theater, the figure at the far right of the central vignette, who holds a mask, could be a muse.[28] The muse Melpomene was typically portrayed holding a tragic mask of Herakles, as, for example, in a third-century sarcophagus depicting Apollo and the Muses (Fig. 43; fourth figure from the left).[29] Melpomene carries in one hand Herakles' club (the central part of which has been lost) and in the other hand a mask, which represents the hero wearing his lion-head helmet. On the Darmstadt Casket, the head in



44. Detail of the Darmstadt Casket showing Herakles consulting an oracle, Constantinople (?), Byzantine, twelfth century, ivory, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt, Germany, Kg 54:215a–d.

the hand of the figure at the far right resembles that of Herakles at the far left, suggesting that it, too, was intended as a mask of Herakles. Muses dressed in long robes with their heads covered in a similar manner also appear on antique sarcophagi.[30] In this context, the muse signals that the man she accompanies was learned and refined.[31] Melpomene may have served the same purpose for Herakles on the Darmstadt Casket. Yet this positive depiction of the hero would have been somewhat undermined by the story: As noted above, Herakles subsequently murdered Linos in passionate outrage against the tutor's criticism.

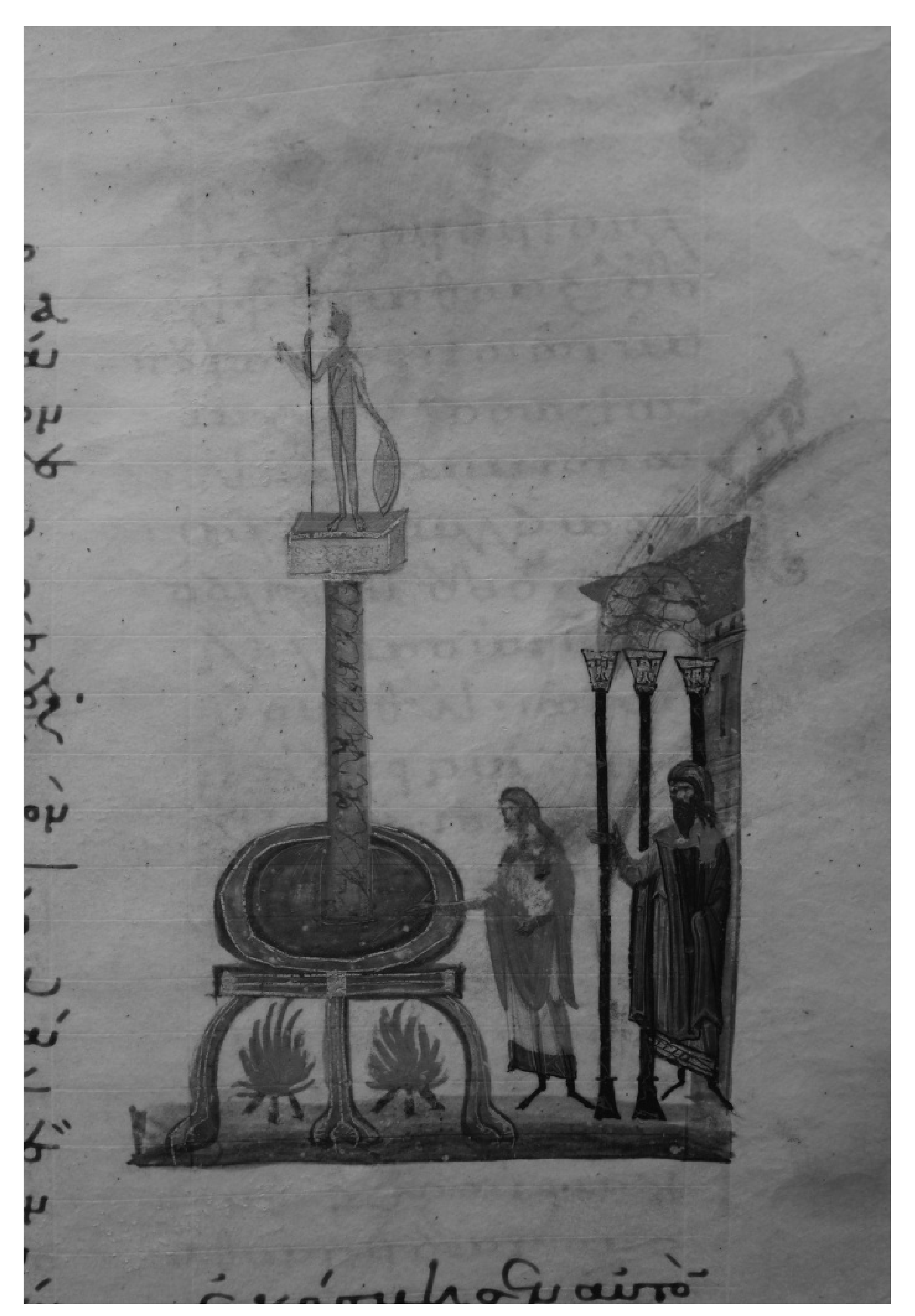
Herakles appears a third time on the back panel, here completely nude, sitting on his lion-skin cloak, which is draped over a basket (see Fig. 37b and detail Fig. 44). This seated position is commonly associated with Herakles at rest after having cleaned the Augean stables, as depicted on a tenth-century Byzantine ivory casket (Fig. 45), or in scenes depicting Herakles at a banquet, where he is usually depicted drunk.[32] In the Darmstadt Casket, however, Herakles is neither slumped over in exhaustion, nor slumped back in inebriation. Instead, he sits upright, his hand raised in the gesture of speech. He converses with a statue standing on a pedestal at the left. Two naked, childlike figures climb the shaft and look up to the statue, which holds a staff in one hand and is nude except for a head covering.[33] In the background at the center of the composition, a tall stand supports a bowl with an open flame.



45. Plaque showing Herakles from a box, Byzantine, eleventh century, ivory and bone, Stifts Museum, Xanten, Germany. © 2010. Photo: Stephan Kube.

I propose that the scene depicts Herakles consulting the Delphic Oracle.[34] This event transpired after Herakles, plagued by illness following the murder of a friend, appeals to Apollo's oracle at Delphi for a cure, a story recounted by Apollodoros.[35] Upon completing his Twelve Labors, Herakles went in search of a wife. He entered an archery contest, sponsored by Eurytus of Oechalia, for the hand of Eurytus's daughter, Iole. Although Herakles won the contest, Eurytus refused him the prize, fearing that Herakles would lose his temper and kill Iole, as he had his previous wife, Megara. However, Eurytus's son, Iphitus, argued on Herakles' behalf. Subsequently, Iphitus defended Herakles against accusations that he had stolen a herd of cattle. Despite Iphitus's significant demonstrations of loyalty, Herakles went mad and threw Iphitus from the walls of Tiryns. Afflicted with an illness as a result of this transgression, Herakles eventually sought a cure from the Delphic Oracle.

Other Byzantine representations of the Delphic Oracle likewise depict supplicants speaking directly to the statue of Apollo rather than to his priestess, including an illumination from an eleventh-century Byzantine manuscript (Jerusalem, Patriarchal Library, Taphou 14, fol. 101r) (Fig. 46). Although different in composition, the Darmstadt scene has the key elements of the Delphic Oracle: the cult statue holding a shield and spear and the stand with an open flame.[36] The Darmstadt interpretation of the Delphic Oracle, although



46. Priests at the Tripod of Delphi, Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus, Byzantine, eleventh century, pigment on vellum, full page ca. 32 by 25 cm, Jerusalem, Patriarchal Library, Taphou 14, fol. 101r.



47. Coin depicting (obv) Herakles making an offering and (rev) the Tripod of Apollo, Greek, 420 B.C.E, silver, diam 2.4 cm, National Museum of Denmark, SNG Cop 1773.

unique within Byzantine art, resonates with a circa 420 B.C.E. Greek coin depicting Herakles (Fig. 47).[37] Like the vignette on the Darmstadt Casket, the coin shows him naked and seated on his lion skin. An altar is depicted, although in front of Herakles rather than behind him. The hero lifts his hand, but gestures to offer a branch (possibly of laurel, the sacred tree of Apollo) rather than to speak. The reverse portrays Apollo and his tripod, indicating that the scene of Herakles on the obverse depicts the hero beseeching the Delphic Oracle.

The cult statue in this scene might help fix the date of the box. Tenth- to eleventh-century depictions of pagan cult statues are typically fluid in form and expressive in gesture. For example, two dislocated tenth-century ivory plaques show Hippolytos interacting with pagan cult statues (Fig. 48a and b).[38] In one plaque, the sculpture stands atop a pedestal, while in the other, it stands on a rocky crag. Each figure offers a wreath or diadem to Hippolytos. Like the cult idol on the Darmstadt Casket, these figures are nude, but unlike the Darmstadt statue, which is extremely rigid in posture, these figures gesture freely and move with ease.[39] Each holds a staff in one hand and a shield in the other. The static pose of the Darmstadt idol is closer to that of the cult statue in the eleventh-century manuscript Taphou 14 (see Fig. 46).[40] While this scene conveys, on the surface, Herakles' piety, the reason behind his petition – the murder of Iphitus – reflects less favorably on Herakles' character. Indeed, his appeal at Delphi further exposed the hero's rash temper: When the Oracle did not immediately reply to his inquiry, Herakles attempted to steal the tripod in order to establish his own oracle. In this respect, the scene parallels that of Herakles en route to study with Linos; on the surface, each scene is complimentary, but events subsequent to the moment depicted reveal less positive aspects of his character.

In the fourth scene of Herakles, the hero is nude and reclines on a bed, drawing a woman toward him (see Fig. 37b and detail Fig. 49).[41] She is bare from the waist up and resists his advances by turning away and attempting to leave. The scene may portray a Byzantine version of Herakles coercing Auge, who subsequently gave birth to their son, Telephos.[42] The tree in the background of the scene, which seems to sprout from Herakles' loins like a Tree of Jesse (the metaphoric genealogy of Christ represented in the form of a tree or


a


b

48a. Plaque depicting a warrior, Byzantine, tenth or eleventh century, ivory, 6.4 by 4.7 by 0.7 cm, Grünes Gewölbe, inv. no. II 447, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden. Photo: Jürgen Karpinski.

48b. Plaque depicting a warrior, Byzantine, tenth or eleventh century, ivory, 6.4 by 4.6 by 0.7 cm, Grünes Gewölbe, inv. no. II 448, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden. Photo: Jürgen Karpinski.

a vine, sometimes depicted sprouting from the body of a reclining Jesse), may foreshadow the couple's prominent offspring. Comparison with ancient versions of the scene supports the identification, such as a second-century coin of the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius (r. 138–61) (Fig. 50).[43] This vignette adds a definitively unflattering image of the Greek hero that is perhaps intended as a foil for the first image (i.e., Herakles taming the horses of Diomedes) and an inflection of the intervening two scenes (i.e., Herakles en route to Linos and beseeching the Delphic Oracle) lest the viewer be inclined to see the ancient character in a wholly virtuous light.

The vignettes depicting Herakles run the gamut from heroic and refined to human and weak. They show the hero both at the height of his successes and in moments of moral and physical weakness. Although these scenes might have been familiar to a viewer well versed in iconography from ancient art, they were also accessible through the stories of Herakles told in Apollodoros's mythological compendium. In any case, the program is designed for a viewer who is familiar with obscure events from the hero's life and requires some reflection in order to comprehend its meaning. The object therefore would have appealed to a relatively erudite and no doubt exclusive audience.

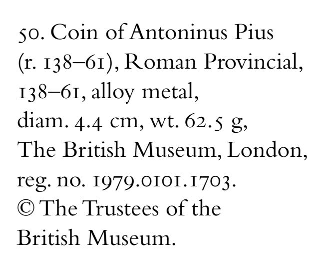


49. Detail from the Darmstadt Casket showing Herakles and Auge, Constantinople (?), Byzantine, twelfth century, ivory, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt, Germany, Kg 54:215a–d.

In addition to the four scenes from the life of Herakles, the Darmstadt Casket depicts three scenes that can be linked to the Alexander Romance. Like the mythological handbook of Apollodoros, the Alexander Romance was written in antiquity, no later than the third century. It maintained popularity throughout Byzantine times.[44] It was originally composed in Greek. The tale was eventually translated into Latin, Armenian, Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic, Serbian, English, French, German, and Hebrew, evincing its widespread appeal in the medieval era. On one of the end panels is depicted the quintessential Byzantine representation of the ascension of Alexander, when the king flew into the heavens to assess if he had reached the ends of the earth (see Fig. 38a).[45] Alexander wears a crown and the *loros* (jeweled cross-over scarf), which together formed the conventional ceremonial attire of the middle Byzantine emperor.[46] He travels in a basket chariot drawn by winged griffins. At the lower corners, two laborers work the earth, gathering fruits and transporting the harvest. They both turn and look up at the ascending chariot.

The similarity of the figure in the ascension scene to the rider in the first vignette on the back panel supports their mutual identification as Alexander the Great (compare Figs. 37b and 38a). The figure on the back panel also wears a crown, but instead of the *loros*, he is clothed in a mantle decorated with a *tablion* (square decorative panel, stretching across the upper part of the mantle; the *tablion* was a sign of rank). He speaks to a figure standing in a tree who is





50. Coin of Antoninus Pius (r. 138–61), Roman Provincial, 138–61, alloy metal, diam. 4.4 cm, wt. 62.5 g, The British Museum, London, reg. no. 1979.0101.1703. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

nude except for a head covering.[47] As described in the romance, Alexander, like Herakles, consulted an oracle of Apollo, although not that of Delphi, but instead the oracle of the so-called country of Helios, a land Alexander explored during his journey to India. Alexander entered a sacred grove at the shrine of Apollo, where he heard a voice that revealed his impending death.[48] The text states that the oracle was invisible, but this detail raised an obvious problem for the artist, who instead rendered the oracle in corporeal form. It is possible that, in order to make clear its identity, the artist depicted the figure exactly like the cult statue of Apollo in the subsequent scene of Herakles consulting the Oracle at Delphi: Both are nude, display the same body type, and wear comparable head coverings. The figure in the tree, whose raised right arm has been lost, may have originally held a staff.[49]

On the Darmstadt Casket, Alexander is depicted in a triumphant mode ascending to the heavens in a chariot and consulting an oracle at the far reaches of the earth. The two scenes convey important aspects of Alexander's identity: his hunger for exploration and his bold challenge of the limits of humankind. As noted in Chapter 3, these accomplishments led to Alexander's becoming a model for military expansion, especially eastward conquest. These same feats also came to be interpreted as evidence of his hubris. Yet in comparison with the depictions of Herakles, Alexander is represented in a decidedly favorable light. Wearing the costume of a middle Byzantine emperor, he is clearly intended to serve as an imperial prototype.

The last scene on the front panel depicts a rider slaying a beast (see Fig. 37a). The clean-shaven man wears a short cloak typical of a soldier. He drives a spear into the snakelike creature that writhes at his horse's hooves. He is most likely one of the dragon-slaying saints – George, Theodore, or Demetrios – who were extremely popular in the middle Byzantine period. They were typically depicted as mounted warriors.[50] The figure on the Darmstadt Casket is clean shaven, and his hair is arranged in tightly cropped curls. These iconographic characteristics are typical of Saint George and support identifying the figure as this holy person.[51]

As protectors against terrestrial enemies of the empire, military saints combated both earthly foes and the demonic forces that inspired these adversaries. Saint George served a prophylactic role, aiding in defense against – rather than in victory over – foes of the Byzantine state.[52] In this regard, the rider on the Darmstadt Casket complements Alexander the Great: While the ancient Greek king is a prototype of imperial expansion and conquest, Saint George embodies the defensive aspect of Byzantine militarism.

IMPERIAL EXEGESIS

The Darmstadt Casket depicts an amalgamation of figures, drawing from classical and Byzantine sources to unequal degrees and in a seemingly haphazard manner. Yet all of these characters emerged in the middle Byzantine period as archetypes of the Byzantine emperor. Herakles' popularity as a royal model extended back to the Greco-Roman period, and Alexander emerged as a Byzantine imperial type in the tenth century.[53] The orations by Leo the Deacon (ca. 950–92) favorably compare the emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963–9) to Herakles.[54] In the early tenth-century biography of the ninth-century emperor Basil I (r. 867–86), Basil is credited with descent from Alexander the Great.[55] Basil named his third son Alexander, an indication of the Greek king's rank as an imperial role model. In the eleventh century, the court historian Michael Psellos (1018–ca. 1081) employed both Herakles and Alexander as forerunners to the emperors in his *Chronographia*.[56] In her twelfth-century biography of her father, Alexios I (r. 1081–1118), the princess and scholar Anna Komnene (1083-ca. 1153) makes use of Herakles and Alexander as imperial analogues.[57] Also in the twelfth century, the court poet Theodore Prodromos (ca. 1100–70) compared the imperial heir, Isaac, to Alexander because, like the ancient Greek king, Isaac combined military prowess with learning.[58] The use of Herakles and Alexander in encomia as royal models coincides with the general trend of the middle Byzantine period to invoke the antique past as a means of valorizing the medieval present.[59]

A similar role as imperial prototype can be attributed to the saintly dragon slayer. Saint George emerged as an imperial model in the reign of the militaristic




51. *Aspron Trachy* of John II Komnenos (r. 1118–43), Constantinople, Byzantine, 1122–43 (?), electrum, diam 3.2 cm, wt 4.32 g, Harvard Art Museums, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Bequest of Thomas Whittemore, 1951.31.4.1713. Photo: Imaging Department © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

emperors Nikephoros II Phokas, John I Tzimiskes (r. 969–76), and Basil II (r. 976–1025).[60] At this time the popularity of Saint George also spread beyond the imperial family: A late tenth- or early eleventh-century lead seal belonging to the courtier Tatikios, imperial *protospatharios* and *kleisouraches* of Tezerboule, depicts Saint George combating a snakelike dragon.[61] The warrior-saints remained popular in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries during the Komnenian period, when they appeared prominently in imperial imagery. Following this broader pattern, John II Komnenos (r. 1118–43) depicted the saint on his coins, although as a standing military figure, not on horseback (Fig. 51).[62] During the Komnenian period, emphatically militant imagery was increasingly employed in verbal and visual depictions of the emperor himself. Alexios I was lauded in imperial panegyrics for his performance on the battlefield.[63] A painting of Isaac II Angelos (r. 1185–95; 1203–4) described by Theodore Balsamon (ca. 1130–ca. 1195) is said to portray the emperor mounted and brandishing a sword, an image that was unusual for twelfth-century ruler iconography but recalls depictions of military saints.[64] The "militarization" of the imperial image particularly characterized imperial art and encomia produced under the emperor Manuel I.[65]

While military saints were popular imperial emblems throughout the middle Byzantine period, Alexander the Great became a positive exemplar only during the later years of the era. In early Byzantine imperial rhetoric under Constantine I (r. 306–37) and continuing through the tenth century and the advent of the Macedonian dynasty (887–1056), Alexander, the central imperial exemplar featured in the Darmstadt Casket, was commonly viewed as a foil to the Byzantine emperor. It was not until the reign of the Komnenian dynasty that Alexander became a forcefully positive imperial prototype.[66] The use of "romantic" types – including Alexander – as models for the Byzantine emperor is commonly identified as a twelfth-century Komnenian phenomenon.[67] The gilded silver cup with vignettes under arcades, which depicts Alexander and possibly Herakles, is one among a group of twelfth-century works of art that reflect this new sensibility (see Fig. 40).[68] The negative attitude toward Alexander in early Macedonian-era sources points to the incompatibility of the program of this box with tenth-century imperial values and calls into

question the common dating of the Darmstadt Casket to the tenth century, while evidence for the increased popularity of Alexander as an imperial role model in the Komnenian era supports dating the object to the eleventh or possibly twelfth century.[69]

When considered in sum, both literary and artistic evidence points to the late eleventh or twelfth century as the most likely period for the coalescence of themes and concepts found in the Darmstadt Casket. Particularly with intensified hostilities between Byzantine and Islamic powers, foremost the Seljuqs, Alexander's importance as an imperial model grew. As a warrior-king who had extended the borders of his empire to the east, he was an appropriate type for the late eleventh- and twelfth-century Byzantine emperors to emulate. Furthermore, in the middle Byzantine period, military saints were increasingly invoked to protect the empire against Eastern foes, especially the Seljuqs.[70] This development aligns the dragon-slaying Saint George with the other characters depicted on the box.

THE CROSS-LEGGED LUTE PLAYER

For any viewer who did not grasp the common thread connecting the vignettes of Herakles, Alexander, and Saint George, the theme was made explicit by the final plaque showing the lute player (see Fig. 38b). The enthroned, cross-legged ruler is a well-known iconographic type found ubiquitously in medieval Islamic art and inherited from the Sasanians and their Near Eastern predecessors.[71] The figure on the Darmstadt Casket sits on a dais facing frontally and holds a lute in his hands. The throne platform is supported by fantastic animals resembling winged lions. Two figures approach the throne with their hands raised as if to strike the lute player.

An eleventh- or twelfth-century silver bowl from Iran or Afghanistan represents a comparable princely scene, with the ruler seated on his dais in the company of musicians and attendants, one of whom offers him a drinking cup (Fig. 52).[72] Such scenes also frequently incorporate powerful animals, such as lions at the foot of the royal throne; in the Darmstadt Casket, similar beasts are incorporated into the structure of the dais. The lute player in an eleventh- to twelfth-century Seljuq silver bowl sits on a comparable platform throne, draped with a similar round-edged textile (Fig. 53).[73] Behind the heads of both figures float ribbons, a Sasanian feature frequently preserved in medieval Persian representations.[74]

Although the cross-legged seated lute player derives from a distinctly different iconographic and cultural tradition than the other motifs on the Darmstadt Casket, the visual parallels and contrasts made between this panel and that of the ascension of Alexander cue the viewer to read the Islamic figure as part of the semantic program of the box (compare Figs. 38a and b). The style of



52. Bowl, Iran or Afghanistan, eleventh or early twelfth century, silver, diam. ca. 10 cm, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, inv. no. S-499. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Vladimir Terebenin, Leonard Kheifets, Yuri Molodkovets.

the lute player and ascension plaques is more static and hieratic than the naturalistic representation on the long panels, indicating that these short panels were intended to be considered together. Appearing on opposite ends of the box, their positioning calls for comparison. Both Alexander and the lute player face forward, beneath central canopies. They are shown seated, with animals on either side: Winged griffins pull the chariot in the Alexander panel, and winged lions emerge from either side of the dais on which the lute player sits. From above and to each side, additional figures reach toward them. The contrasting actions of these secondary figures offer a key distinction between the two compositions. While the winged victories above Alexander reach down to place crowns of triumph on the heads of the griffins, the figures accompanying the lute player lunge forward as if to strike him. The laborers beneath



53. Bowl depicting a lute player, Seljuq, Iran, eleventh century, silver with niello, diam. 13 cm, h 3.8 cm, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany, inv. no. I 582. Photo credit: Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz / Art Resource, NY.

the griffin chariot represent productive and peaceful subjects of Alexander, but those of the lute player are in obvious revolt. Furthermore, while Alexander is attired in the authoritative costume of the Byzantine emperor, the lute player, although crowned and enthroned, is partially naked, his corpulent belly drooping heavily.

In short, the composition of the figures, both internally and in contrast to one another, highlights the superiority of Alexander and positions the second figure as his antithesis: a rival king. Specifically he may represent Darius, king of the Persians and nemesis of Alexander. Unlike Alexander, who is celebrated in the *Romance* for the devotion of his people, Darius suffered the treachery of his satraps, Bessus and Ariobarzanes, who ultimately murdered the Persian king in his own palace.[75] These traitors could be the figures flanking the cross-legged

man.[76] They lunge violently toward Darius from either side and raise weapons to strike him.[77]

Darius features prominently as a villain in middle Byzantine imperial orations. The Byzantine historian John Skylitzes (fl. 1050–1100) cited Alexander's battles against the Persians as the model for the campaigns of Constantine IX Monomachos (r. 1042–55) against the "Turkish race."[78] In this regard, Alexander's heightened popularity as an imperial prototype in the Komnenian period may be explained in part by the growing threat posed by the Seljuqs. Michael Italikos (d. ca. 1157), in a letter dated to 1137 or 1138 to the grand domestic John Axouch (d. 1150), praises John Axouch and the emperor John II Komnenos (r. 1118–43) for having surpassed through their military feats not only the preceding Macedonian dynasty, but also Alexander. Italikos refers to the city of Alexandria, stating, "Here in olden times Alexander turned Darius to flight and gave this place its name; and here you have driven back all of Asia, reversing the past misfortunes, and changed the tide from the Persians to the Macedonians."[79] Similar sentiments are found in Nikephoros Basilakes' (ca. 1115–82) oration to John II upon the emperor's return from battle in Cilicia in 1138. John is said not only to emulate but also to surpass Alexander as a conqueror of the East.[80] Alexander takes on particular importance in imperial rhetoric of the twelfth-century emperor Manuel I, who is celebrated as a conqueror of the Persians in the image of Alexander in a poem written following his successful campaign against the Seljuqs. The text juxtaposes Alexander's defeat of Darius with Manuel's expulsion of the sultan.[81] In the twelfth-century funeral oration for Manuel by Eustathios of Thessaloniki, Manuel is compared with Alexander, who in turn is said to have surpassed the greatness of Herakles.[82] This evidence points to the particular valence of the Alexander–Darius comparison during the Komnenian period, especially during the reign of Manuel I.[83] It must also be noted, however, that these models and parallels were not entirely fixed. In a poem attributed to Manganeios Prodromos (fl. ca. 1150), which compares a portrait of Manuel I with his family to a painting of the marriage bed of Alexander and Roxanne, Manuel is positioned as the superior exemplar, preserving an orderly and dignified demeanor in contrast to Alexander, who was shown dissolute and disheveled.[84]

Even without knowing the specific literary source of the Islamicizing scene on the Darmstadt Casket or the specific use of the Alexander–Darius comparison in imperial encomia, a middle Byzantine viewer could have still discerned its meaning. Alexander, one of the foremost prototypes of the Byzantine emperor, visually contrasts his obvious antitype, the indulgent and deposed Eastern ruler. Darius is portrayed in the style of a contemporaneous "Persian" king through the mode of medieval Islamic art. This comparison of Alexander and Darius provided an expedient means of communicating

with a middle Byzantine viewer because, by the late eleventh century, the "Persians," reincarnated as the Seljuqs, ranked among the primary enemies of Byzantium.

Robert Nelson and Paul Magdalino call attention to the close proximity of literary and visual rhetoric at the Komnenian court, especially with regard to imperial panegyrics.[85] Their observation further supports a redating of the Darmstadt Casket to the latter part of the middle Byzantine era. Yet the majority of the examples they discuss were works of art and literature produced for public presentation and display, while the intimate scale of the Darmstadt Casket implies that it was intended for more limited, private viewing. A select audience might account for the relative obscurity of some of its references, chosen in part to draw from – and thereby evince – the patron's and viewer's erudition. In this regard, the object might be considered a portable version of the mosaic decorations described in the homes of twelfth-century aristocrats, which depicted the accomplishments of the emperor Manuel I and were produced as a gesture of loyalty to the ruler.[86] Although large in scale, they appeared in relatively private social spaces, frequented by a select audience of privileged individuals. In this way, we can see the Darmstadt Casket participating in a wider artistic and literary phenomenon, which in turn played an essential role in social practices related to the celebration of the emperor and the formulation of his image.

VISUAL RHETORIC IN THE DARMSTADT CASKET

Understanding the role of the Islamicizing motif in the program of the Darmstadt Casket hinges on the viewer's recognition of the comparison orchestrated between Alexander and Darius. The juxtaposing of these two figures recalls the Greek rhetorical technique of comparison, known as *syncresis*, which was emphasized by the late third-century orator and scholar of rhetoric, Menander of Laodicea, as a key element of imperial orations, or *basilikos logos*.[87] Menander described the use of *syncresis* as follows:

> It is a feature of amplification to make the hearer attentive and win his concern, making him think he is about to hear something very important. Make comparison to each of the headings, always comparing nature with nature, upbringing with upbringing, education with education, and so on, finding examples of Roman emperors or generals or the most famous of the Greeks.[88]

Handbooks used in the instruction of rhetoric during the middle Byzantine era also prescribe the comparison of opposite types to achieve "parallel scrutiny of goods or evils or persons or things, by which we try to show that the subjects under discussion are both equal to each other or that one is greater than

the other."[89] A similar strategy of comparison is used in the juxtaposition of the two end panels on the Darmstadt Casket. The striking visual analogy of the rulers serves to "amplify" and draw the viewer's attention to the message conveyed through these plaques and, by extension, through the entire program of the box. In this respect, the visual strategies at play in the Darmstadt Casket resonate with broader social practices and communication techniques of middle Byzantine intellectual culture.

Maguire has shown that literary rhetoric served as a model for structuring compositions in middle Byzantine religious art, particularly through "parallels that were set off against each other in antithesis."[90] The Byzantines "linked through formal similarities images that were opposed in content, and thus emphasized the antithesis of ideas by means of visual analogies."[91] A similar strategy informs the end panels of the Darmstadt Casket: Although compositionally each figure is similarly situated, the secondary actions, crowning versus slaying, provide an unmistakable contrast. Furthermore, the comportment of the two characters – exposed pendulous stomach versus imperial regalia – makes an emphatic statement of their different natures. It is through parallel and antithesis that the theme of the casket's program is conveyed. Maguire proposes that elite Byzantines would have been familiar with these rhetorical strategies through the literary education of the time. A broader audience would have encountered these modes of composition and analysis through sermons read during the liturgy. In this way, compositions and patterns of thought from literary rhetoric were absorbed into the visual logic and general aesthetic outlook of the era. The reality of this broad exposure is essential to a full appreciation of the Darmstadt Casket's ability to communicate with its audience through a composite program that employs visual and thematic parallels and contrasts to convey its meaning.

The conjunction of seemingly disparate scenes found on the Darmstadt Casket also reflects additional strategies – specifically mixture and inclusion – practiced in middle Byzantine literary rhetoric. In his study of imperial and aristocratic funerary orations, Panagiotos Agapitos shows that the juxtaposition of stylistic elements and techniques from disparate genres is one of the distinctive characteristics of these compositions. The selection and recombination of contrasting elements represents a self-conscious strategy that, although apparently derivative, entails an innovative act to produce novel literary compositions.[92] What strikes the modern reader as ignorance of, or at best reckless disregard for, distinctions of literary genre is in fact an intentional practice demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of the "pure" form of a genre by contrasting it meaningfully with other generic types. Similar strategies can be understood to inform the composition of the Darmstadt Casket. Vignettes selected from disparate mythological and epic tales provide fertile

ground through which to reflect on a common theme of righteous kingship and the Byzantine emperor as embodiment of noble – and less than noble – forerunners: Alexander, Herakles, and Saint George.

Agapitos suggests that middle Byzantine literary aesthetics promoted a combination of disparate genres and deviations from the existing canon in order to heighten literary effect.[93] The figure of Darius can be understood to represent in visual rhetoric a comparable act of "inclusion," which entails the mixing of one genre with another in a single literary work such that the two remain distinct and one dominates the other.[94] In the Darmstadt Casket, the cross-legged lute player was expropriated from its original genre of Islamic princely imagery and included in the ranks of Byzantine imperial prototypes such as Alexander, Herakles, and Saint George, who formed the canon of the *basilikos logos* as described by Menander. The lute player, although maintaining recognizable formal features of its foreign source, is expropriated from its original context in the sense that the meaning of the motif is fundamentally altered to serve the specifically Byzantine message of the casket's program. The object offers an intriguing parallel in visual rhetoric to the practices of mixture and inclusion in middle Byzantine literature.

Although the Darmstadt Casket is unique in its particular combination of imagery and narratives, textual description of monuments suggests that the strategies employed in this object reflect broader practices of middle Byzantine artistic production. The epic story *Digenis Akrites*, first recorded in the twelfth century, describes a wall-painting program that, like the Darmstadt Casket, combines disparate figures from multiple sources under a common theme.[95] The ceilings of Digenis Akrites's palace are decorated with

> the victories of all those men of yore who shone in valor, beginning with Samson's fight against the gentiles…David…and Goliath…the fabled wars of Achilles…the wonderful daring of Odysseus…Bellerophon killing the fiery Chimaera; the victories of Alexander and the defeat of Darius…the wise Alexander's arrival among the Brahmans…the miracles of Moses…and the glorious deeds of Joshua.[96]

Although this work of art existed only in the fictional realm of the Akritic epic, it nonetheless indicates the existence of a visual rhetoric that juxtaposed figures and events from disparate sources according to a common theme, in this instance heroic valor. Furthermore, many of the characters cited in the description of this imaginary palace also appear in actual imperial panegyrics and art, as noted already in the case of Alexander and David. In addition, the orator Theophylaktos of Ohrid (ca. 1050–1126) compares the emperor Alexios I to Odysseus in a panegyric composed in 1088.[97] The paralleling of contemporary imperial accomplishments with the deeds of biblical heroes in actual works of

art is found in the description (ca. 1174–5) of the house of the Byzantine aristocrat Leo Sikountenos, in Thessalonike, where the deeds of Joshua and Moses were depicted alongside those of the emperor Manuel I.[98]

Agapitos tracks the development of inclusion and mixture in middle Byzantine literature beginning in the ninth century and peaking in the twelfth, while Maguire proposes a chronological trajectory that places the closest relationship between literary rhetoric and art in the twelfth century (although he cites examples of such interaction as early as the ninth century). The common tenth- to eleventh-century date for the Darmstadt Casket places the box within the period during which a conjunction of visual and literary rhetorical strategies evolved, but a revised date to the late eleventh or twelfth century coincides more closely with parallel developments in visual and literary rhetoric, specifically an increasingly militaristic notion of imperial authority and a growth in comparisons of the emperor with figures such as Alexander and Herakles.

THE DARMSTADT CASKET AND MIDDLE BYZANTINE IMPERIAL IDEOLOGY

The Darmstadt Casket does not provide a direct or one-dimensional reflection on the nature of imperial power, but a subtle and open set of possibilities for the viewer's reflection. Like the mural in Digenes Akrites's palace, the front panel of the Darmstadt Casket shows archetypal hero-rulers in triumph (see Fig. 37a). At the two ends, Herakles subdues wild horses, while Saint George conquers a dragon. Both scenes were understood in Byzantine allegory as the defeat of evil, specifically of human sin and passion. Herakles is described in the late tenth- to early eleventh-century compendium, the *Souda*, as an allegorical philosopher. His labors, particularly the slaying of the hydra, figure as conquests over the passions and are facilitated by his club and lion skin, symbols of rationality and wisdom, respectively.[99] The scene of Herakles as a philosopher/musician at the center could have held a similar significance, showing how, through learning and the arts, one might conquer worldly temptations and irrational passions.[100]

Nonetheless, the box does not present a pat celebration of heroism. Instead it engages the viewer in a complex reflection on the merits of heroic prototypes. Ambivalence is found in the portrayal of Alexander, whose moment of supreme conquest is followed by the foretelling of his death, an episode that emphasizes the limitations of even the greatest heroes in the face of human mortality.[101] Likewise Herakles' appeal to the Oracle at Delphi exposes one of the hero's major shortcomings, his unstable and rash temper: He came to beseech the Oracle because he murdered his friend, Iphitus, and when he did not immediately receive an answer to his inquiry, he attempted to steal

the tripod in order to establish his own oracle. The subsequent scene, the rape of Auge, reveals Herakles' less admirable exploits of a sexual nature. The Byzantines were certainly aware of this aspect of the hero's character. In his early thirteenth-century *History*, Niketas Choniates (ca. 1157–1217) lampooned the lascivious Andronikos I Komnenos (r. 1183–5), comparing his lustfulness to that of Herakles, who deflowered "the fifty-one daughters of Thyestes."[102]

Yet virility alone was not a negative characteristic for Byzantine emperors. Theodore Manganeios, for example, compared Manuel I with Eros and celebrated his erotic prowess in three poems composed between 1152 and 1156.[103] It is not unreasonable, therefore, to consider that the seduction of Auge by Herakles might be viewed as a normative scene within Komnenian-era imperial panegyric. Indeed, the prominent tree, sprouting, it seems, from Herakles' loins, may have been a reference to the fortitude and number of his progeny. As Magdalino notes, Komnenian dynastic success was equated in encomia with a tree that spread and grew, expanding in both strength and size. In particular, the oak tree features as a metaphor for the imperial family.[104] This would inflect interpretation of Auge's rape, casting it as a prelude to the birth of her son, the hero Telephos.

After further considering these potentially less flattering representations on the reverse, the viewer might be led to question the seemingly positive representations on the front panel. For example, the scene of Herakles en route to study with Linos was followed by one of his characteristic rages when he murdered his tutor after being chastised as a slow learner. The vignette does not, on closer scrutiny, conform to the positive theme of victory over passions. This malleability of meaning may have been part of the design. Viewers could draw comparisons between figures based on the depiction of a given scene, but knowledge of subsequent or preceding events would suggest new meanings and different connections between the stories and characters. Similarly, the emperor who studied these vignettes would be prompted to engage in a rigorous moral scrutiny of not only the models depicted on the casket but also his own motivations and behavior in comparable situations.

The images on the back panel of the Darmstadt Casket are followed by a vignette that opposes in the extreme Alexander's triumphal ascension. The indulgent, corrupt Eastern ruler Darius appears in his most pathetic moment, murdered by his treacherous satraps. The Sasanian-Islamic ruler image provides the visual shorthand to convey a condemnation of the Persian qua Seljuq leader. On another level, the vignette might warn any emperor considered too friendly toward Eastern foreigners against losing sight of the true nature of Byzantine imperial identity or risking a reckless slide into moral decline. Such a caveat would have been particularly appropriate for the Byzantine ruler who welcomed "Persians" to his court, as Manuel I did in 1161, when, as noted above, he received the Seljuq sultan Kılıç Arslan in Constantinople as part of

their negotiations for an alliance. In these manifold ways, the casket stands as a meditation on the virtues and shortcomings, successes and failures, privileges and responsibilities of prototypical (and Byzantine) rulers.

An ambivalent attitude toward great men of the past is also found in middle Byzantine literature, revealing a new development in the mechanics and intentions of the *basilikos logos* from those defined by Menander during the third century. In his *Chronographia*, Psellos reflects on ancient heroes as imperial prototypes:

> When we look at the great leaders of men, persons renowned for their characters and their words and deeds, men such as Alexander the Macedonian, the two Caesars, Pyrrhus of Epirus….not to speak of others who won brief commendation from their admirers, when we look at these men, we do not find in their lives an equal balance of virtue and vice, as we know from their biographers but generally they incline somewhat to the worse. What then can one say of those who imitated them, if they seemed inferior to them in some small degree – I do not mean in all aspects of virtue, but in those where these great men have succeeded above all others?[105]

He then notes how various emperors fell short of certain achievements and virtues of the ancient kings, such as bravery or conquest, but surpassed them in other virtues, such as kindness and temperance. According to Psellos, Romanos III (r. 1028–34) failed in his emulation of Alexander when he misguidedly declined an option of peace and attempted to conquer the Saracens in Syria; Isaac I Komnenos (r. 1057–9) was, according to Psellos, unable to control his horses as Alexander had tamed Boukephalos; and Constantine IX Monomachos (r. 1042–55) was inferior to Alexander in bravery but surpassed him in kindness and in control of his temper.[106] He argues that the orator must acknowledge both the emperor's failings and his merits in comparison to the ancients. It is this ambivalent attitude, weighing both the virtues and the vices of archetypal exemplars from the ancient past – and the Byzantine emperors who succeeded them – that underlies the program of the Darmstadt Casket.[107] Still the one Christian figure, Saint George, is shown only in a virtuous and triumphant mode, perhaps an indication that ultimately it is the Christian saint who is the most reliable exemplar for the Byzantine emperor.

In yet another respect, the box might bring the role of rhetoric and imperial encomium self-consciously to the fore. Within the twelfth-century court, the concept of rhetorical presentation as a form of "theater" was popular. The central scene on the front panel of the box, depicting Herakles in the company of two women, one of whom holds a mask, like the muse Melpomene, may be a reference to the new *theatron* of the Komnenian era, the rhetorician's stage.[108] The message of the central vignette on the Darmstadt Casket would celebrate

the emperor as a man of learning and remind him of his role as a supporter of this art and the courtiers who practiced it.[109] If the object was commissioned by one of these court orators as an imperial gift, then the pointed reference to the illustrious history of his craft would have served as a form of self-promotion in tandem with the celebration of the emperor.

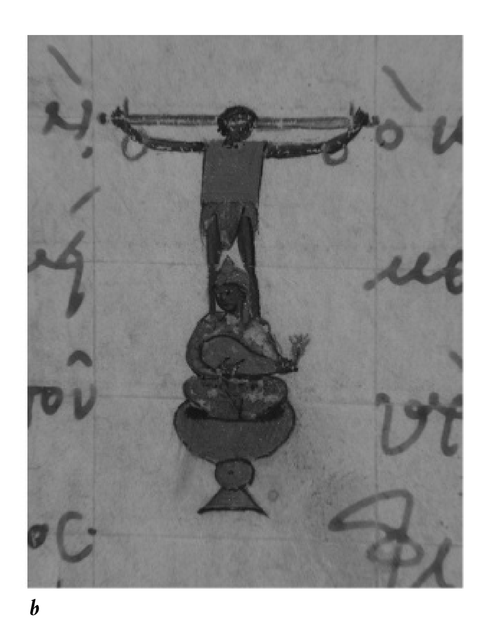
THE COMMON CULTURE MODEL AND THE QUESTION OF FUNCTION

Much scholarship on the topic of cross-cultural interaction in the medieval Mediterranean world focuses on the concept of a common culture of luxury objects and an iconography of wealth and power that transcended boundaries between East and West, Christian and Islamic.[110] The presence of an Islamicizing figure on the Darmstadt Casket has led to the suggestion that it, too, functioned in this cross-cultural domain, serving as a diplomatic gift.[111] But the specific way in which this foreign image is depicted introduces subtle but important inflections of conventional Islamic princely iconography that imbue the expropriated image with new, specifically Byzantine meaning and would have precluded use of the Darmstadt Casket as a gift of state. In addition to the obvious fact that the Persian king is shown murdered by his own subjects, the depiction of Darius may be tailored to connote negative stereotypes of "Persians" held by Byzantine viewers.

Consideration of other middle Byzantine objects that employ the Islamic iconographic type of a cross-legged figure playing a lute illustrate this point. Two illuminated initials in a manuscript of the Homilies of Gregory Nazianzus dated around 1062 (Turin, National University Library, Cod. C.I.6, fols. 72r and 76v) depict similar motifs. One figure sits on a column. Wings projecting from behind his head create the cross-bar of a "tau" (Fig. 54a). The other musician sits on a round platform and is accompanied by an acrobat, who stretches a scarf between his hands and dangles rings from his wrists; together they also form the Greek letter "tau" (Fig. 54b).[112] The exotic character of the figures is indicated in the second initial by the musician's and acrobat's dark skin and in both initials by the fantastical headgear. In each instance, the depictions indicate that the Byzantines associated such figures with performers. Depicting Darius as a similar type may have served to demote the foreign king to the lowly status of an entertainer.

In addition, the naked, corpulent upper body of the Darmstadt lute player is an uncommon feature of medieval Islamic depictions of seated rulers or even musicians. A rare example, a twelfth- to thirteenth-century mold for a ceramic bowl, is an exception that proves the rule (Fig. 55). Although depicting a seated, cross-legged figure with an elaborate crown, the image eliminates many of the other distinctly royal features of the iconography, such as the throne, ribbons, attendants, or animals, thereby distancing the naked figure


a


b

54a. Initial for the letter "tau," Homilies of Gregory Nazianzus, Byzantine, ca. 1062, pigment on vellum, full page 34 by 23 cm, Turin, National University Library, Cod. C.I.6, fol. 76v. Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria di Torino.

54b. Initial for the letter "tau," Homilies of Gregory Nazianzus, Byzantine, ca. 1062, pigment on vellum, full page 34 by 23 cm, Turin, National University Library, Cod. C.I.6, fol. 72r. Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria di Torino.

from a courtly context.[113] The nakedness of the Darmstadt lute player would seem, therefore, to represent a Byzantine innovation on Islamic royal iconography, and I propose that the motivation for this alteration came from the desire to deride the foreign ruler. Indeed, nudity, particularly of nonideal body types, held special appeal to the Byzantine sense of the ridiculous.[114] For example, a most uncomplimentary image of the drunken Herakles in a late tenth- or early eleventh-century ivory plaque shows him incapacitated to the point of stumbling (Fig. 56).[115] In contrast to the trim, idealized body of the Darmstadt Herakles, this figure sports an unheroic potbelly akin to the corpulent physique of the Darmstadt lute player. A plaque from another eleventh-century casket depicts an aged warrior whose stooped posture and incongruously light-footed step are comic inversions of the virile, muscular physique and commanding stride of the antique heroes who typically adorn Byzantine ivory caskets (Fig. 57).[116] Again, the swollen potbelly looms large in this unflattering depiction. Scenes of unheroic nudity in Byzantine art carried a pejorative tone, suggesting that the pendulous, exposed stomach of the lute player was a visual annotation of his disgrace, a shorthand of ridicule.[117] By altering the figure on the Darmstadt Casket in a disparaging manner, the designer expropriated the motif of the cross-legged figure so as to reflect a Byzantine sense of humor and



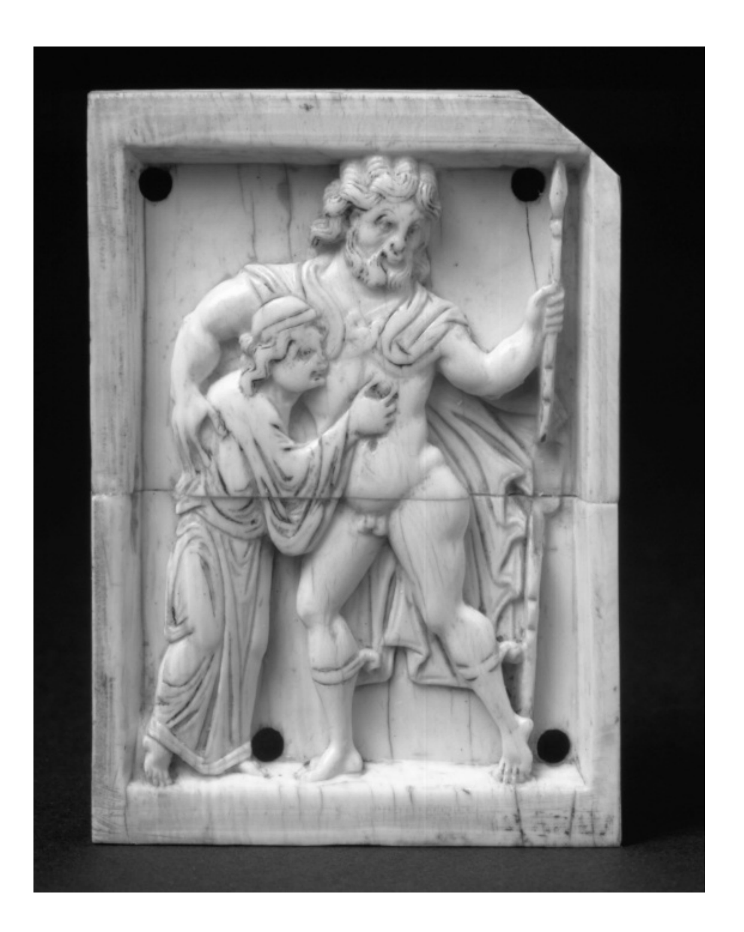
55. Mold with applied decoration, eastern Iran, reportedly from Ghazni, Afghanistan, twelfth to thirteenth centuries, earthenware, The al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait National Museum, inv. no. LNS 1060 C.

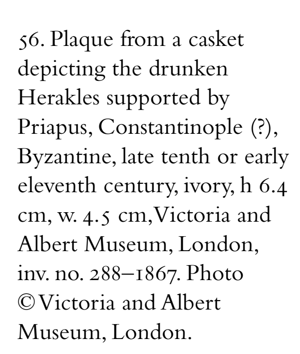
mode of derision. These efforts indicate that the object was produced within Byzantium for consumption by Byzantines.

The image of the corrupt and pathetic Eastern ruler fits well with negative stereotypes of Muslims attested in middle Byzantine literature. In her well-known history of her father's reign, Anna Komnene refers to "Saracens" (Arabs), "Persians" (the Great Seljuqs), "Turks" (the Seljuqs of Rum), and "Ishmaelites" (Muslim Turks) on numerous occasions.[118] She has no kind words for Muslims in general, but expends special effort in disparaging the so-called Ishmaelites, stating

> the barbarian Ishmaelites....were the slaves of drunkenness and wine and Dionysus. The Ishmaelites are indeed dominated by Dionysus and Eros; they indulge readily in every kind of sexual license, and if they are circumcised in the flesh they are certainly not so in their passions. In fact, the Ishmaelites are nothing more than slaves – trebly slaves – of the vices of Aphrodite.[119]

The pudgy, naked body of the lute player on the Darmstadt Casket could refer to the gluttonous nature that Anna Komnene associates with the "Ishmaelites,"

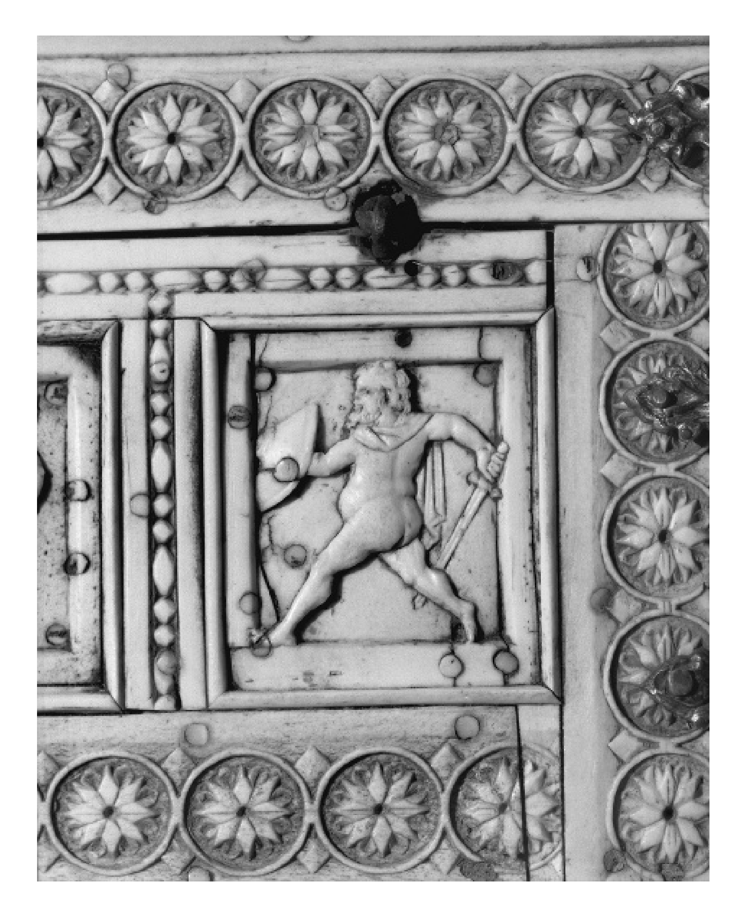




56. Plaque from a casket depicting the drunken Herakles supported by Priapus, Constantinople (?), Byzantine, late tenth or early eleventh century, ivory, h 6.4 cm, w. 4.5 cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, inv. no. 288–1867. Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

serving as a Byzantine shorthand for the perceived dissipation of Muslim rulers and their courts. In Anna Komnene's account, "Ishmaelites" embody an absolute antithesis to Byzantine identity. In the Darmstadt Casket, Darius, represented in the royal iconography familiar from medieval "Persian" art, epitomizes the negative opposite to Alexander the Great, the foremost prototype of the Byzantine ruler.

For these reasons, use of the Darmstadt Casket as a diplomatic gift to a Muslim recipient would have been wholly inappropriate, both because of the negative representation that it makes of a prototypical "Persian" ruler, and, returning to an earlier point, because of the ambivalence it reveals regarding the fallibility of Byzantine imperial prototypes and by extension of the emperor himself. The pejoratively rendered Islamicizing figure on the Darmstadt Casket reveals that in addition to a Byzantine-Islamic diplomatic visual language of shared values and references, there also circulated an artistic vocabulary that included expropriated foreign motifs reflecting attitudes that were not well suited for diplomatic or other kinds of intercultural exchange but instead intended for limited circulation, most likely among a courtly audience.



57. Plaque depicting an aged warrior, Byzantine, eleventh century, ivory, ca. 3 by 4 cm, Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, D.C., acc. no. 53.1. © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, D.C.

It is striking that this visual encomium to Byzantine imperial prowess is cast in purely metaphoric and allegorical terms. The Darmstadt Casket does not present a literal portrait of the emperor but an exegetical reflection on ideal kingship. While it is possible that the emperor could have commissioned an object like this, the panegyrical character of the program raises the possibility that this visual encomium might have been formulated by a member of the same social group that generated textual encomia. Imperial panegyrics were commissioned from or gifted by courtiers, who presented their laudations on ceremonial occasions. These highly poetic, often heavily typological texts reflect imperial ideologies of the era, but were engineered by nonimperial voices. Although ill-suited for use as a diplomatic gift to an Islamic recipient, the box would have been entirely appropriate as a gift to be exchanged within the Byzantine court, perhaps, as suggested already, from a courtier to the emperor himself. A box such as this, wrapped in a thick layer of imperial encomia, would have derived its worth as much from the complexities of its program as from the value of its generously cut ivory plaques. The twelfth-century Byzantine orator Theophylaktos argued that the gift of his words

surpassed the gold and silver that subjects typically presented to the ruler.[120] But one can imagine that imperial laudations expertly carved in the finest ivory would have been more highly prized than either words or precious materials alone.[121]

Far from being an impenetrable or idiosyncratic work of art, the Darmstadt Casket depicts events and characters familiar to the middle Byzantine viewer through texts, in particular Apollodoros's mythological handbook, the Alexander Romance, and middle Byzantine imperial encomia. The use of compositional strategies common to Byzantine literature suggests that the casket epitomizes rhetorical techniques that were prominent, if not pervasive, in the visual and literary arts of the middle Byzantine elite. Even if courtly and imperial viewers did not recognize the narrative references for all the vignettes depicted on the box, they would still have been equipped to discern the general themes of rulership and the strategies of visual rhetoric that contrast heroes and antiheroes, accepted and rejected rulers. The Darmstadt Casket bespeaks a sophisticated and innovative thought system that resonates with middle Byzantine literature and art, especially that of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Although the imperial prototypes depicted on the Darmstadt Casket had a long history in the Byzantine world, the coalescence of these types – Alexander, Herakles, and Saint George – in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries argues in favor of viewing the Darmstadt Casket as a product of this era. The Komnenian period also corresponds to a time of mounting hostilities between Byzantium and the Seljuqs, a historical reality that would have provided ample motivation for the uncharitable depiction of a "Persian" ruler. The saddle of Alexander the Great, the vest with the Seal of Solomon, and the Darmstadt Casket each employed reference to archetypal kings of the past in order to articulate relationships among Byzantine and Muslim rulers of the present. While the realm of diplomatic gifts explored in Chapter 3 demonstrates the need for parity in cross-cultural communications, the Darmstadt Casket instead emphasizes difference. Its highly uncomplimentary representation of a foreign ruler indicates that it was intended for domestic consumption.

This attitude toward foreign art and peoples also contrasts with that proposed in Chapter 2. The Troyes Casket represents Byzantine appropriation of foreign iconographic and stylistic types to express a receptive, albeit hegemonic, attitude toward foreign artistic models and the cultures they represent. In the Darmstadt Casket, the exotic cross-legged ruler is expropriated from its original Islamic system of meaning and is altered to convey a derisive commentary on the scions of Darius and the legacy of the "Persian" royal house. The figure is deployed in sharp contrast to the Byzantine emperor, embodied by Alexander. Rather than imaging an emperor and empire in which foreign artistic elements might find a positive role to play in the articulation of

imperial glory and the expansion of territory, the Darmstadt Casket expresses a highly antagonistic mentality toward foreigners, and a more polemical conception of the division between Byzantine and "other."[122] A similar concern for the articulation of boundaries between Byzantine and exotic art and identity is also prevalent in the last work of art to be considered here, the Mouchroutas Hall at the imperial palace in Constantinople.

CHAPTER FIVE

INCOMPARABILITY

The Aesthetics of Imperial Authority

I BEGAN THIS BOOK BY ACKNOWLEDGING TWO BUILDINGS IN Constantinopleand its environs that attest to Byzantine adoption of Islamic architecture at the imperial court: the ninth-century Bryas Palace and the twelfth-century Mouchroutas Hall. As symbols of imperial authority and stages for court ceremony, each monument contributed to the larger image of royal power in Byzantium. Although the Bryas was said to have been no different in form or decoration from its Abbasid model, details regarding the specific decoration of this structure are absent from Theophanes' account.[1] In the case of the Mouchroutas Hall, however, the description offered by Nikolaos Mesarites (ca. 1163–1214) is more specific, providing a comparatively vivid picture of the materials used in the building as well as its form and decorative program.[2]

For this reason, scholars typically treat the passage as a descriptive document upon which to base hypothetical reconstructions of the Mouchroutas.[3] While the archaeological potentials of the ekphrasis are unusually rich, a focus on these aspects of the text has obscured other potential values. The verbal depiction of the Mouchroutas Hall (see Appendix) is found in Mesarites' *History of the Palace Revolt of John Komnenos* and must be read contextually. The story recounts a coup attempted on July 31, 1200, at the imperial palace in Constantinople, which placed John Komnenos (d. 1200), a relatively low ranking and undistinguished member of the imperial family, on the throne. Mesarites' description of the Mouchroutas occurs at the climax of the historical narrative, just before John is captured, beaten, and decapitated, and his dead

body is paraded through the Hippodrome by soldiers loyal to the reigning emperor, Alexios III Angelos. John Komnenos was better known as John the Fat, an epithet that indicates the critical eye that history casts upon this character. John was related on his mother's side to the dynasty of the Komnenoi, who occupied the Byzantine imperial office from 1081 to 1185. This lineage provided the necessary qualification for him to assume the throne. Yet despite the high rank and illustrious reputation of his forefathers, John was a man of little merit. In the historical record, he is noted foremost for his drunkenness and obesity.[4] Acclaimed emperor after a popular revolt, he was a puppet ruler who was violently unseated within a day.

From a literary perspective, Mesarites' text employs an elevated prose style and sophisticated, even innovative, rhetorical technique. It was clearly written for an erudite audience, presumably aristocrats of the Constantinopolitan court. These readers were likely to have lived through the events that are described, and the setting of the story, the imperial palace in Constantinople, would have been familiar to them.

I propose that Mesarites uses the Mouchroutas Hall as a rhetorical tool for articulating John's unfitness for rule through a nuanced assertion of the superior nature of Byzantine imperial authority and John's inability to fulfill this image. In this way, the ekphrasis provides a rare and fascinating example of how a Byzantine viewer negotiated Islamic architecture through Byzantine aesthetic values, and how he judged this foreign work simultaneously to satisfy and fall short of Byzantine standards, particularly those encoded in religious and imperial art and architecture. I am not suggesting that the Mouchroutas Hall was built with the expectation that viewers would make comparisons between churches and this building, or between sacred and imperial icons and the decorative program of the Mouchroutas ceiling. Rather, these juxtapositions were constructed by Mesarites to convey in subtle but assertive terms the inferiority of Islamic art and the culture from which it derived; they indicate his reception of, not the original intentions behind, the foreign work of art.[5]

THE MOUCHROUTAS: FORM, FUNCTION, AND FOREIGN ORIGIN

In a key phrase, Mesarites emphatically states that the structure was the work of "a Persian hand."[6] The Byzantines commonly referred to contemporary foreigners by the names of their ancestors. In twelfth- and thirteenth-century Byzantine parlance, "Persian" meant Islamic, and specifically Seljuq.[7] As already noted, the Seljuqs were among the primary adversaries of the Byzantines from the eleventh until the mid-thirteenth century. Mesarites composed his history on the eve of the Fourth Crusade, probably in 1203. This was a period of mounting military and political insecurity for Byzantium, which found itself in an increasingly untenable position, threatened on both its eastern and western

fronts. The coup that temporarily placed John Komnenos on the throne was a symptom of larger tensions and instabilities at the court, which intensified as the Byzantines attempted to navigate the competing pressures from Crusader and Muslim powers.[8] In the midst of these conflicts, however, the Byzantines also made periodic alliances with different Turkic groups, including certain branches of the Seljuq dynasty. Indeed, while the precise construction date of the Mouchroutas is unknown, it was probably built in the mid-twelfth century, possibly during a period of détente around 1161, when the Seljuq sultan of Rum, Kılıç Arslan II (r. 1155–92), visited the court of the Byzantine emperor Manuel I Komnenos (r. 1143–80).[9] The Mouchroutas Hall was, therefore, part of a complex phenomenon of Byzantine-Seljuq interactions during the twelfth century, and it is reasonable to assume that members of the Byzantine court would have had ample opportunity to familiarize themselves with various aspects of Seljuq art and culture as a result of the varied contacts between these groups.

In addition to the ceiling of the Mouchroutas having been executed by a "Persian" artist, Mesarites reports that the surface depicts "Persians in their various costumes," suggesting that it was decorated with so-called princely cycle imagery, which typically depicts courtly figures merrymaking. Given the nature of its decoration, the hall was likely used for receptions and banquets, and the foreign style of the Mouchroutas demonstrates the cosmopolitan character of the twelfth-century imperial palace environment.[10] Dining at the court was a highly regulated affair, in which social hierarchy and the might of the emperor were carefully coded in the arrangement of guests, the observance of protocol, and even the selection of food and entertainment provided to those in attendance.[11] Although a space for leisure, the Mouchroutas Hall would have still served as a stage for performing the power of the ruler, a display choreographed to impress members of the court as well as visitors from beyond this elite Byzantine community.

It has been suggested that the name of the hall, Mouchroutas, may derive from the Arabic word *makhruta* (cone), in which case it likely referred to the chamber's distinctive ceiling, which judging from Mesarites' description seems to have had the faceted, honeycomb structure of an Islamic *muqarnas* vault.[12] An alternative possibility for the origin of Mouchroutas is the Greek word μουχρούτα (mouchrouta), meaning "a large bowl or vessel," which is attested during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[13] With this meaning in mind, we might understand "Mouchroutas" to refer to the possibly rounded, bowl-like shape of the structure, or it could emphasize instead the connection of the hall with drinking and merrymaking. Regardless of the specific origin of the name, the hall was clearly understood to draw from a foreign tradition and was specifically associated with a "Persian" (Seljuq) origin.

The form and program of the Mouchroutas can be gleaned from Mesarites' description, and possible parallels can be identified in roughly contemporary

Islamic and Islamicizing architectural decoration.[14] Mesarites first describes a staircase leading up to the hall, which indicates that the structure was composed of two levels. The staircase is built from brick, gypsum, and marble. Part of the building is decorated with cross-shaped polychrome tiles colored deep red, blue, green, and purple.[15] These features call to mind the early Seljuq palace pavilion in Konya, the kiosk of Kılıç Arslan II, the same Seljuq sultan who visited Constantinople in 1161.[16] The exact date of this structure is uncertain, but its patronage is secure; it is therefore typically placed within the period of Kılıç Arslan's reign, around 1156–92.[17] Like the Mouchroutas, the kiosk is composed of two levels (Fig. 58). More importantly, it is the earliest preserved Seljuq building ornamented with ceramic tiles (Figs. 59, 60, and 63), many of which are cross shaped and show a palette similar to that noted by Mesarites.[18] The kiosk tiles are executed in *mina'i* (enamel), a highly refined overglaze technique of polychrome painting more commonly found in ceramic vessels. *Mina'i* is also known as *haft-rangi* (seven-color), a reference to its multihued palette, which consists of several of the colors cited by Mesarites, including blue, green, red, brown/black, gold, yellow, and white.[19] In Seljuq architectural tile ensembles, cross-format pieces were often positioned at the interstices of large eight-pointed stars.[20] In this arrangement, the stars tend to dominate the composition. Another pattern, however, positions cross-format tiles with small square-shaped tiles in the spaces between the arms, an arrangement within which the crosses appear more prominently (Fig. 60).[21] Mesarites does not mention star-shaped tiles, raising the possibility that in the Mouchroutas, cross-format tiles were combined with small squares.[22]

Mesarites's reference to the "serrated" (ὀδοντουμένη) decoration to either side of the staircase may also find analogues in Seljuq architectural ornament, albeit of a later date. Seljuq modifications to the Roman theater at Aspendos (near modern-day Antalya, Turkey) undertaken in the 1230s or 1240s include the application of chevron (zigzag) patterned frescoes in a staircase leading to a belvedere (Fig. 61). The in situ remains are greatly deteriorated, but nonetheless preserve a motif that could be described as "serrated."[23] Seljuq palaces of the 1230s to 1240s preserve frescoes in chevron patterns on both exterior and large interior wall expanses. In addition, the palace at Alanya, Turkey, shows zigzag patterns executed in tile.[24] As such, these buildings provide possible parallels for the combination of materials, decorative forms, and motifs employed in the Mouchroutas.

Moving into the hall, Mesarites explains that the ceiling was constructed from densely packed hemispheres arranged at angles. As noted above, his description recalls the structure of Islamic *muqarnas* vaults, such as the wooden ceiling in the twelfth-century Norman royal chapel, the Cappella Palatina in Palermo, Sicily, where concave forms compose an intricate stalactite structure of faceted stars and cones (Fig. 62).[25] Mesarites further specifies that the



58. Remains of the Kiosk of Kılıç Arslan II (as preserved in 1897), Konya, modern-day Turkey, mid- to late twelfth century.

Mouchroutas decoration depicts "Persians and their various costumes," and that John the Fat sat on the floor of this marvelous room, "gulping his drink quickly, courting favor with the Persians painted on the chamber and drinking to them" (see Appendix). This description suggests that the subject matter of

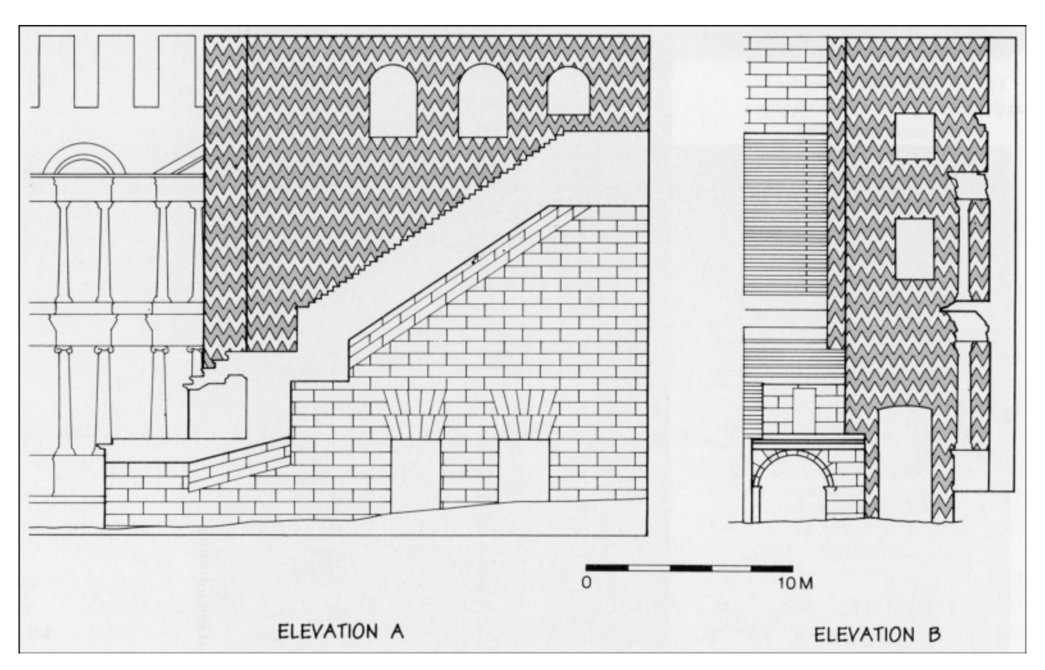


59. Tile panel, Turkey, probably Konya, Seljuqs of Rum, thirteenth century, fritware with overglaze painted and gilded, diam. 23.3 cm, h. 23.5 cm, w. 21 cm, depth 2.9 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jack A. Josephson, 1976 (1976.245). Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

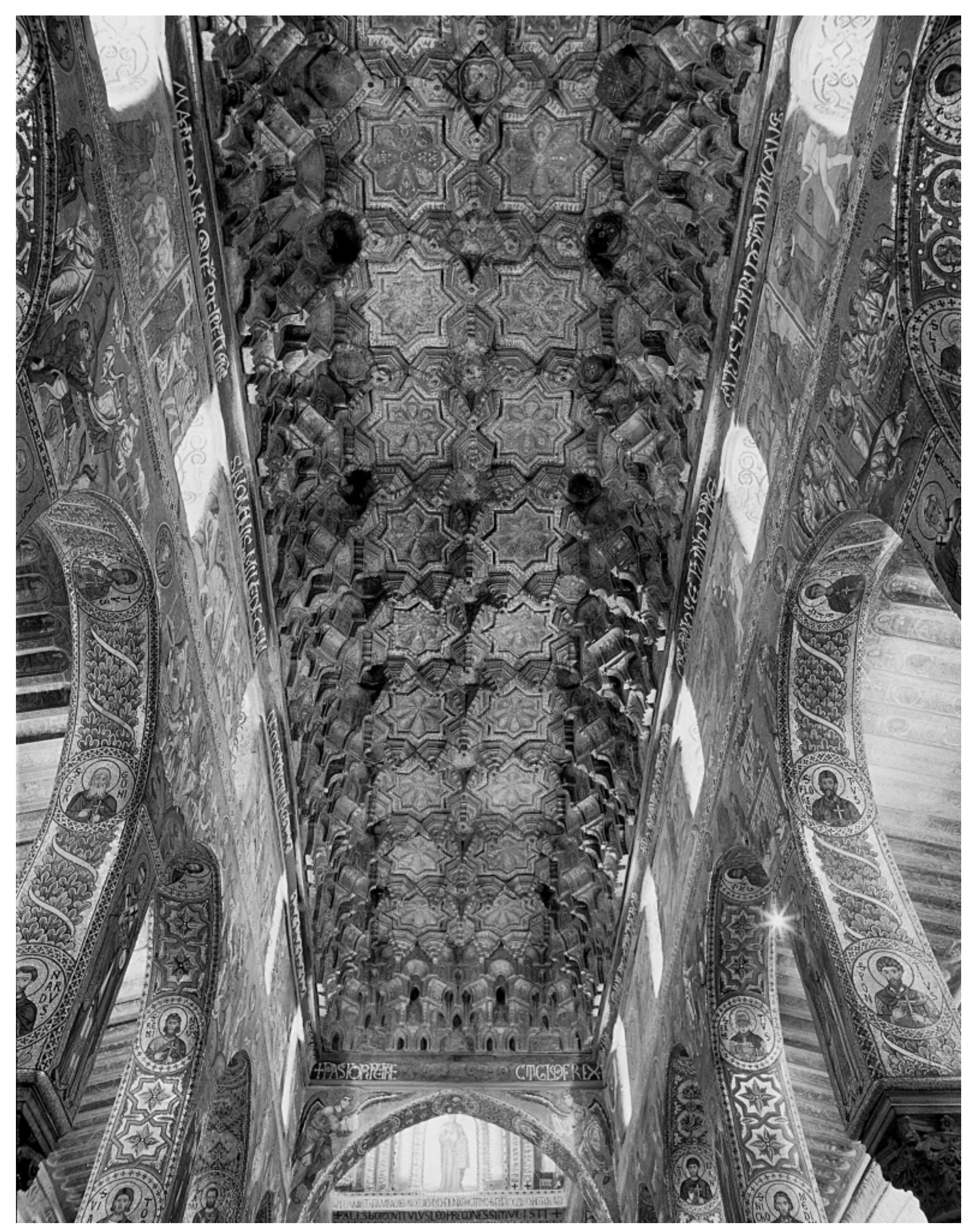
the Mouchroutas program imitated an Islamic "princely cycle," which would have depicted courtiers engaged in elite pastimes such as drinking, hunting, and listening to music.[26] These themes appear in tiles from the kiosk at Konya (Fig. 63) as well as on the ceiling of the Cappella Palatina, where hunters pursue their quarry and courtiers sit cross-legged on the floor drinking glasses of wine, watching wrestlers and dancers, and listening to musicians.[27] A similar structure and decorative repertoire are found in fragments from a mid-tenth- or mid-eleventh-century Fatimid fresco program excavated from the remains of a bath complex in the city of Fustat, near Cairo, which was destroyed in 1168. It preserves hemispherical elements, including one decorated with an elaborately attired seated figure holding a prominent drinking cup (Fig. 64).[28] Close scrutiny of Mesarites' description, in combination with comparative study of extant medieval monuments, suggests that the Mouchroutas possessed features of roughly contemporary Islamic and Islamicizing buildings, including polychrome cross-shaped tiles, chevron patterns, a *muqarnas* ceiling, and a figural program depicting princely pleasures.



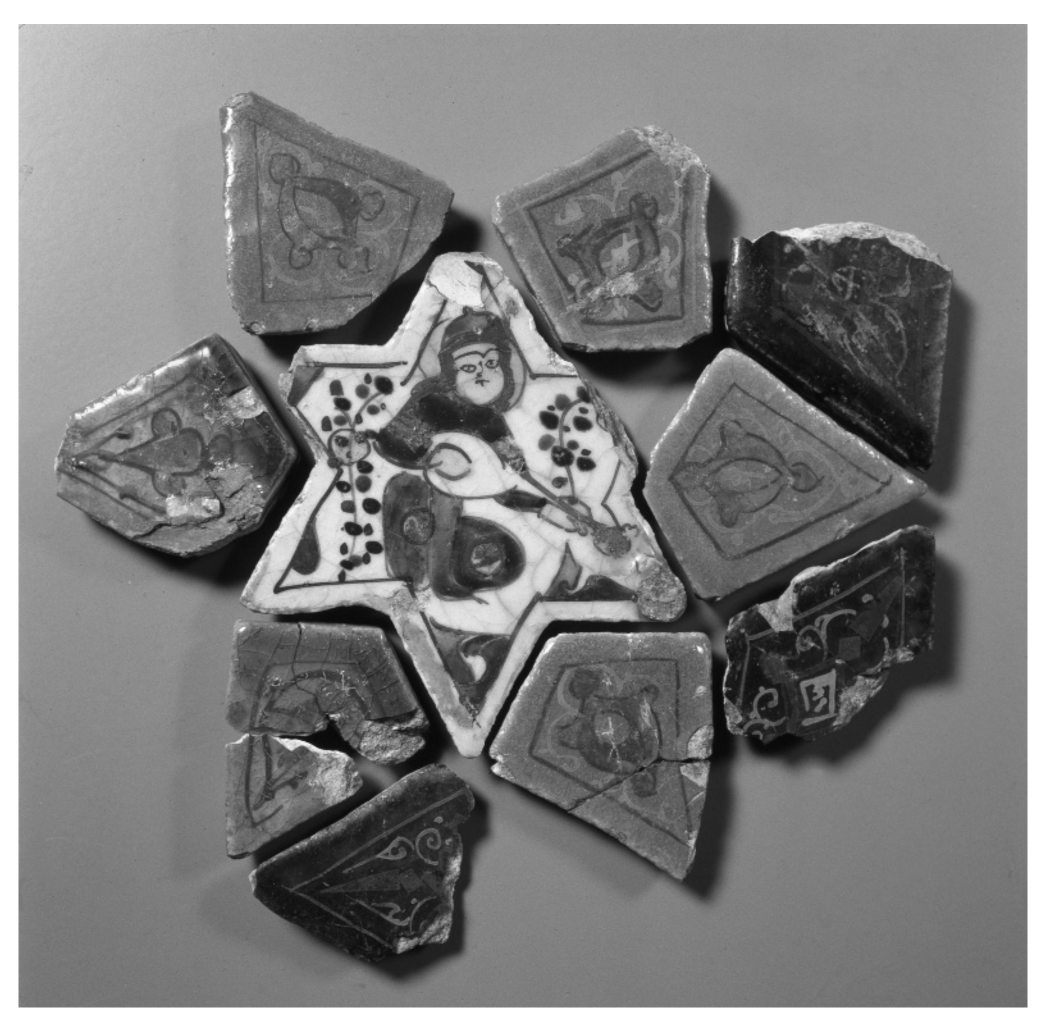
60. Cross-shaped wall tiles interspersed with small square tiles, Turkey, Seljuq, early thirteenth century, h. 68 cm, w. 23 cm, glazed ceramic, Antalya Museum, Turkey. Photo: courtesy of Kale Group Cultural Publications, Istanbul.



61. Elevation drawing of the staircase in the Seljuq alterations to the Roman theater at Aspendos, Turkey, showing chevron frescoes. Photo: courtesy of Scott Redford.



62. *Muqarnas* ceiling of the Cappella Palatina, Palermo, Sicily, ca. 1132. Photo: Scala / Art Resource, NY.



63. Wall tiles from the kiosk of Kılıç Arslan, Konya, Turkey, Seljuq, thirteenth century, glazed ceramic, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany, inv. I. 929 I. 931 I. 936a–f. Photo: Georg Niedermeiser. Photo: Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulterurbesitz / Art Resource, NY.

EKPHRASIS AS ARGUMENT: THE MOUCHROUTAS AS A RHETORICAL DEVICE

This kind of architectural comparison and hypothetical reconstruction marks the level of interpretation at which most art-historical analyses of Mesarites' ekphrasis stop. Certainly one factor contributing to this tendency is the brevity of the ekphrasis itself, which constitutes a relatively short passage within a much longer historical account. It has been suggested that a Byzantine viewer may not have understood the significance of the Islamic program that decorated the Mouchroutas and would therefore have engaged with it only in superficial terms. According to this argument, Mesarites' lack of elaboration

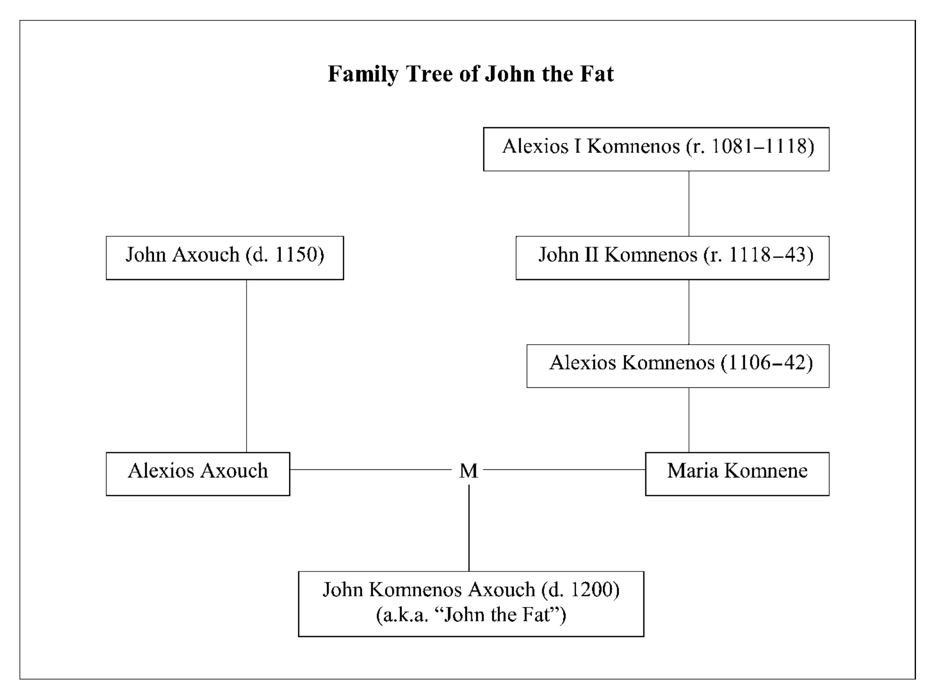


64. Motif of a seated figure from the remains of a *muqarnas* vault, Fustat (near Cairo), Fatimid, fresco, mid-tenth or mid-eleventh century, Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo.

regarding specific details of the program indicates that "their meaning was lost on" him; he registered the material richness of the monument, but ultimately viewed it as "a piece of exotic, even decadent, orientalism."[29]

At stake in this passage, however, is not Mesarites' understanding of the original, Islamic meaning of the decorative program of the Mouchroutas. Rather, the significance of the ekphrasis lies in how Mesarites interpreted this monument through Byzantine modes of visuality.[30] It seems clear that Mesarites did consider the Mouchroutas to be "a piece of exotic, even decadent, orientalism," but this perception is articulated and applied in a more complex manner than has heretofore been recognized. Furthermore, the terseness of Mesarites' description of the Mouchroutas Hall might indicate his expectation that the audience would be well familiar with the monument and the tradition of Islamic palace decoration from which it drew such that a more detailed description was superfluous.[31]

Regardless of the reasons behind the scholarly tendency to focus on the descriptive potentials of the passage, the result is that relatively little attention is paid to the use of the Mouchroutas as a rhetorical device. Yet the description of the hall is not an independent ekphrastic document, but an ekphrastic passage in service of a larger narrative and argument.[32] The description of the building is not undertaken for its own sake; rather, it is closely intertwined with



65. Diagram of the family tree of John "the Fat" Komnenos. Designed by Hyde Taidghin O'Brien. © 2010 Alicia Walker.

Mesarites' intensely critical characterization of John the Fat. The passage introduces the climax of the narrative, when John is executed by soldiers of the true emperor. As such the Mouchroutas plays an important role within the broader purpose of Mesarites' text to vilify John as unfit for the Byzantine throne.

In a key phrase, Mesarites states that the building was a "Persian stage – the work of the hand of John's kinsman from his grandfather's family." This passing comment epitomizes Byzantine muckraking at its best, because it reminds the reader that John Komnenos was in fact John Komnenos *Axouch*. Although on his mother's side John the Fat was descended from two emperors, Alexios I Komnenos and John II Komnenos, his father's family name, Axouch, indicates a less illustrious paternal origin (Fig. 65). Axouch was a foreign, specifically Turkic, name, and it recorded the Seljuq heritage of the other branch of John's family. His paternal grandfather, John Axouch (d. 1150), was taken prisoner in 1097 when still a youth and was kept at the Byzantine court of Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081–1118), where he converted to Christianity. John Axouch became a favorite of the imperial heir, John II Komnenos (r. 1118–43), who eventually granted him the prestigious title *sebastos* (venerable). In the Komnenian era, this rank was given almost exclusively to members of the imperial family, a clear indication of John Axouch's prominence at court and his intimacy with the emperor. Under John II Komnenos, John Axouch later

held the important position of *megas domestikos*, the supreme military commander after the emperor. John Axouch continued to serve under John II Komnenos's son and successor, Manuel I Komnenos (r. 1143–80).[33] The clearest evidence of John Axouch's prestige was the marriage of his son and John the Fat's father, Alexios Axouch to Maria Komnene, the granddaughter of the emperor John II Komnenos and daughter of his eldest son, Alexios Komnenos (1106–42).[34] Alexios Axouch held the respectable office of *protostrator* (chief of the imperial grooms) and led military expeditions to Italy, Cilicia, and Hungary. However, he fell from imperial favor in 1167 under suspicion of conspiring against Manuel I Komnenos.[35]

In twelfth-century sources, reference is often made to the "Persian" origins of John the Fat's family in order to question their fitness for imperial service.[36] Indeed, Mesarites' reference to John the Fat's part-Seljuq lineage can be read as a thinly veiled indictment of John as an enemy of Byzantium. Magdalino observes, "It could be argued that Mesarites' description isolates the Islamic elements in the building because the author's purpose is to evoke the dramatic irony of a usurping emperor of Turkish descent who spent his last tragic moments in suitably infidel surroundings."[37] Yet this observation might be extended to argue that John was lampooned not only for being a Seljuq-John Axouch, but also for not being enough of a Byzantine-John Komnenos, because the rhetorical force of Mesarites' description of John the Fat was generated in part through its striking contrast with the standard image of the middle Byzantine ruler.

As discussed in the Introduction, between the end of Iconoclasm in 843 and the advent of the Fourth Crusade in 1204, imperial portraits followed a decidedly Christian iconography of divine endorsement (see Figs. 1–4). This visual ideology is evident in imperial portraits of John the Fat's own family, the Komnenoi. In the frontispiece to the Gospel book portraying John II Komnenos and his son Alexios – the maternal great-grandfather and grandfather, respectively, of John the Fat – are blessed by Christ, who sits enthroned above them (see Fig. 3). Such images express in visual terms the ideology of divine sanction and parallelism that was at the core of middle Byzantine notions of royal authority. Henry Maguire has characterized these depictions of imperial grandeur as "diagrams of supernatural qualities."[38] In their lack of movement and dearth of human emotion, the emperors are said to mirror the visual signs of divinity conveyed through Christ's immobility and "impassive, detached expression."[39] This perception and projection of the imperial image is found in both art and literature. For example, the eleventh-century courtier and scholar Michael Psellos (d. ca. 1081) characterized the imperial image as "an icon of the signs of God."[40]

It therefore comes as little surprise that, when Mesarites wanted to lampoon the false-emperor John the Fat, he inverted the very qualities that constituted

the core of the imperial ideal. Rather than presenting a stoic picture of John on the imperial throne receiving blessings from Christ, Mesarites describes the degenerate imposter as an obese and sweaty drunkard squatting on the floor of an Islamic-style hall and raising a glass to toast the colorful figures of "Persians" depicted on the ceiling. Mesarites paints in words the image of a man whose erratic movements, disheveled appearance, and undignified posture form an absolute antithesis to the static, orderly, and imposing figures preserved in extant representations of the emperor.[41]

In addition to these rather blunt condemnations, Mesarites criticizes John with more subtle, although no less damaging, associations. In true Byzantine fashion, Mesarites' final insults are delivered through a backhanded compliment. He shows little reservation in praising the aesthetic achievement of the Mouchroutas, celebrating it as a spectacle of color and design, one which provides "insatiable pleasure." But as he concludes regarding its superlative qualities, he states that the building surpasses not a Byzantine monument, but an ancient Greek one: "This Persian hall is more delightful than the Lakonian ones of Menelaus." The genuine aspect of his praise would have been evident to any educated reader who knew of the marvelous palace of Menelaus from Homer's description in the *Odyssey* (bk. 4, ll. 43–113).[42] But to a Byzantine ear, Mesarites' extolling remark might have simultaneously read as cleverly conditional praise. By comparing the Mouchroutas to a non-Byzantine, non-Christian building, Mesarites firmly placed the Islamic monument in a category that operates outside a Byzantine aesthetic system.[43] What, specifically, was at stake in the distinction that Mesarites took pains to express?

While physical properties of color, form, and light were important factors in the Byzantine appreciation of works of art, Byzantine ekphrasis constantly juxtaposes the sensible with the intelligible, indicating that Byzantine aesthetic values were concerned with both the physical and spiritual impact of a work of art.[44] The most essential aspect of Byzantine visuality was the viewer's anagogical engagement. This experience was at its most quintessential when one gazed upon a sacred icon of Christ, the Virgin Mary, or a saint. The viewer perceived not only the beautiful image rendered in pigment, but also its prototype. In post-Iconoclast Byzantium, an image furnished a passage from the depiction of a holy person to the actual saint.[45] Dynamics of sacred visuality could also shape secular visuality, particularly in viewing images of the emperor. The earthly court was understood as a parallel to the court of heaven, and the Byzantine emperor was a reflection of the divine ruler, Christ.[46] Much as an icon served as a conduit to and from the saint it depicted, the emperor was a link with the divine authority of God and his Son. This anagogical principle was conveyed through imperial images like the crowning of John II and Alexios Komnenos (see Fig. 3), which clearly depicts the conductive relationship between emperor and Christ.

In other instances, however, it is possible that certain categories of art were defined by the lack of an anagogical dynamic. I propose that in his description of the Mouchroutas and John the Fat, Mesarites draws upon the viewer's familiarity with the anagogical process of Byzantine visuality in reference to both religious and imperial images so as to lay bare the way in which the Islamic paintings decorating the Mouchroutas fail to realize the spiritual potential of Byzantine art. While the figure of the true emperor or the icons of the saints connected the viewer with a higher level of spiritual truth and sacred reality, the images of the Mouchroutas provided no such revelation. Indeed, they quite simply could not compare.

Access to these more subtle messages embedded in Mesarites' text is greatly aided by the fact that between 1198 and 1203 Mesarites penned a much longer ekphrastic account of another monument in Constantinople, the Church of the Holy Apostles.[47] Liz James and Ruth Webb propose that in the description of this Christian building, Mesarites deploys ekphrasis not only to describe the physical appearance of the structure, but also to reveal the spiritual reality of the images that decorate it.[48] They localize this attitude in the introduction to the ekphrasis, in which Mesarites states,

> Now however it is time for us to proceed in our description to the things within the Church and to look at the things there with the eyes of sense and to understand them with eyes of the spirit. For the spirit is wont to advance from those things that are perceived by the senses, and led by the lesser faculty [of sight], to understand ultimate things and to penetrate to the secret places, to which the faculty which leads it [physical sight] is in no wise able to come.[49]

In other words, the material form and decoration of the building operate as a cue or pathway to a spiritual revelation. For this reason, ekphrasis was not necessarily intended to describe the work of art for the viewer in objective terms, but rather to guide the viewer in looking at it in a specific way. Mesarites' task is to lead his audience to a hidden meaning via description of the physical monument and its decoration. What distinguishes Mesarites is not his reference to the spiritual dimension of sacred art, but rather the explicit manner in which he identifies the revelation of this deeper significance as the fundamental purpose of his ekphrasis.[50] Mesarites' self-proclaimed rhetorical intentions in the case of the Church of the Holy Apostles support the notion that concealed meanings were likewise communicated through his account of the Mouchroutas.

But what of Mesarites' statement that ekphrasis guides the reader beyond the material splendor of the work of art to its spiritual significance? This might be true of the Church of the Holy Apostles, but the Mouchroutas – not only a secular structure, but also an Islamic monument – was no doubt as distant as a Byzantine author might fear to fall from the spiritual truth of art. I believe

it is this very incomparability of Islamic art to Byzantine art, and of John the Fat to the Byzantine emperor, that underlies Mesarites' text. The spiritual reality of the Mouchroutas Hall – and John the Fat – is characterized by failure and absence, and Mesarites took it upon himself to lay bare this truth.

There are two keys to understanding the "ultimate thing" that Mesarites intended to communicate and to access the "secret place" where spiritual truth was to be found in the decoration of the Mouchroutas Hall. The first is the Byzantine concept of the relationship of images, specifically icons, to their prototypes. The second is the ideology of the Byzantine emperor's Christomimetic nature. As noted above, in Byzantine post-Iconoclast thought, the icon was not a dwelling place of the divine but a pathway of access to the holy.[51] When looking at an icon, the physical eye might be limited to perception of the paint, wood, ivory, or precious metal of an image, but the mind could penetrate this material surface to reach more profound spiritual understanding.[52] The anagogical dimension of an icon, its ability to carry the viewer beyond the materiality of an image to the spiritual reality of the holy figure it depicted, was essential to the post-Iconoclast justification of icon veneration.

Mesarites' celebration of the beauty of the Mouchroutas, the skill of its construction, and the lavishness of its decoration at first suggests that the author is satisfied merely to indulge in the "insatiable enjoyment" that the building provides. But in the process of articulating his experience of aesthetic wonder, Mesarites makes specific reference to another characteristic of this Islamic work of art: The satisfaction found in these foreign images is "not hidden, but on the surface." Unlike the Christian icon, which provides a conduit to holy beings, these Islamic images do not conceal deeper spiritual reality; they are devoid of the profound connection with the divine that constitutes the essence of the power of the Christian icon. Just as Mesarites claims responsibility for guiding his audience to recognize the concealed truth of sacred images at the Church of the Holy Apostles, he likewise draws his readers' attention to the absence of this dimension in the paintings of the Mouchroutas ceiling. Although a wonder to the physical eye, they provide little for the mind and nothing for the spirit.

On the one hand, this distinction between foreign art and Byzantine art is not at all surprising, but on the other hand, it is striking that Mesarites expends the effort to draw his audience's attention to this obvious difference.[53] Indeed, having established the lack of an anagogical referent for the Islamic work of art, he shifts immediately from description of the building to description of John. Here Mesarites concludes his anti-anagogical reading of the Islamic decorative program. It is in John – sitting on the floor, drunk and disheveled, wiping sweat from his brow – that these Islamic images find their referent.[54] In this way, a distinction between the anagogical potentials of Byzantine versus Islamic art simultaneously serves as a critique of John and casts a critical gaze upon the otherwise celebrated "Persian" paintings decorating the ceiling.[55] Mesarites'

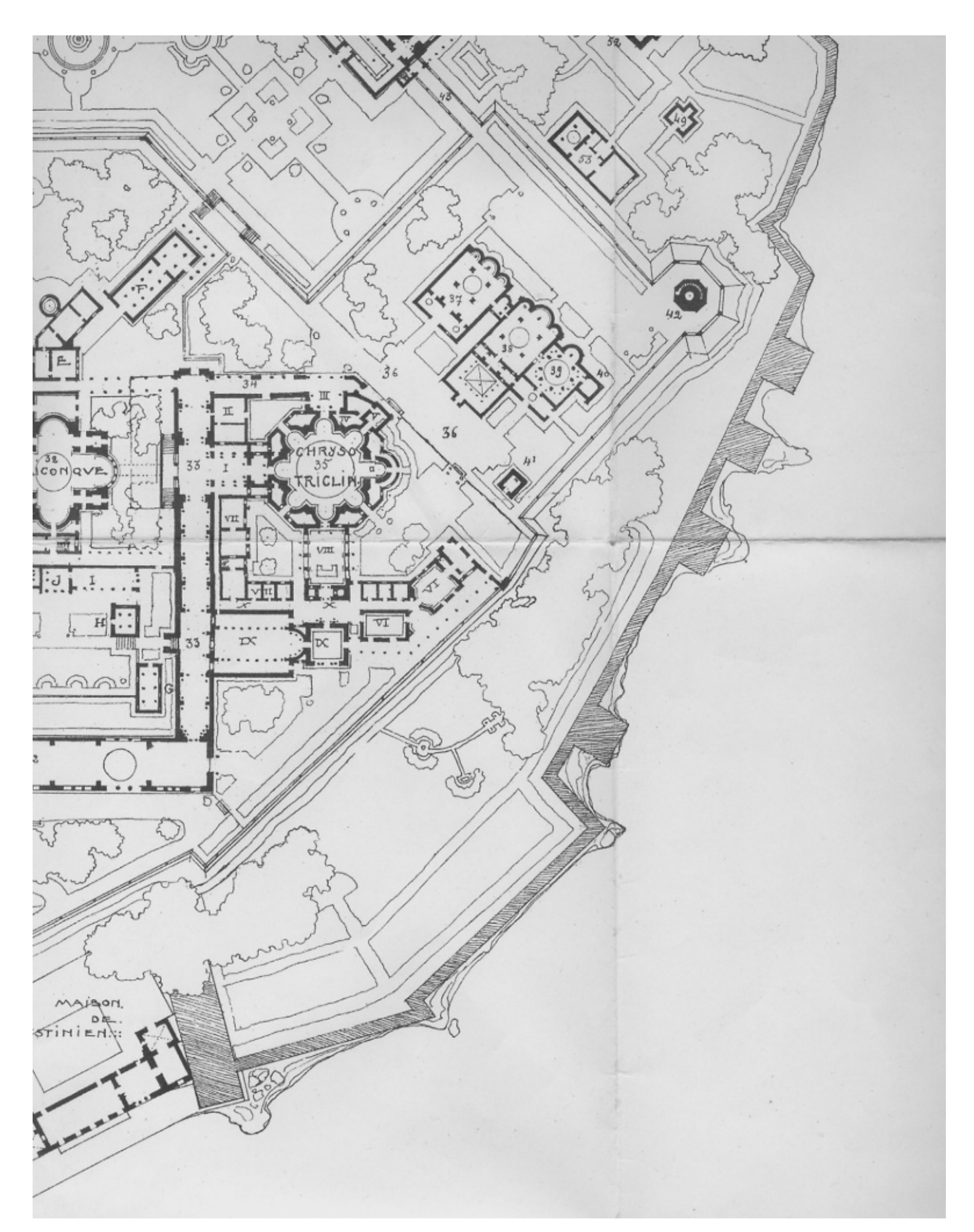
subtle comparisons of the Islamic image to the Christian icon and of the Islamic image to John the Fat constitute the first ultimate thing that Mesarites intends his reader to understand. Penetration of this secret meaning is predicated on the audience's familiarity with Byzantine theories of the relation of images to their prototypes. It demonstrates the use of a sacred Christian mode of seeing to underscore both the shortcomings of a secular Islamic work of art and the corruption of the figure of John the Fat, who parallels the painted "Persians" in both ethnic origin and indecorous behavior.

Access to the second "secret place" that Mesarites seeks to lead his reader requires another key: familiarity with Byzantine imperial ceremonial at the Great Palace and the concept of Christomimesis that informed these rituals. It is clear that Mesarites presents John as unimperial: Although wearing a crown, he is not a king; slothful and degenerate, he sits on the floor, not a throne.[56] The lack of royal dignity in this portrait is absolute. However, Mesarites may further allude to a more specific way in which this scene confirmed John's status as an anti-emperor. In the opening reference to the Mouchroutas, the author draws attention to the location of the building in close proximity to the Chrysotriklinos, or "Golden Hall," the throne room of the Byzantine emperor and the symbolic center of his authority.[57] In Jean Ebersolt's hypothetical plan of the tenth-century imperial palace, the Chrysotriklinos is located at the eastern side of the Great Palace complex (Fig. 66, no. 35).[58] When the Mouchroutas was built, about two hundred years after the phase represented in Ebersolt's plan, it is thought to have occupied a space in the area of the longitudinal hall to the west of the Chrysotriklinos (see Fig. 66, no. 33). While Mesarites' reference to the Chrysotriklinos might be understood as simply topographical, it is also possible that through this juxtaposition he intended to cue his reader to further criticism of John the Fat.

From textual accounts, the Chrysotriklinos can be reconstructed as a freestanding, eight-lobed building resembling a small chapel with a large alcove at its eastern end. This footprint is evident in Ebersolt's reconstruction. In the apselike space of the building's eastern end was located the imperial throne, and a mosaic in the half dome above depicted the enthroned Christ. A post-Iconoclast inscription running around the ceiling of the room is preserved in the *Anthologia Graeca*, a tenth- or eleventh-century compendium of epigrams, many of which were from monuments in Constantinople. The inscription referred specifically to the image in the conch.[59] It read

> The ray of Truth has shone forth again and has dimmed the eyes of the imposters [i.e., the Iconoclasts]. Piety has grown, error has fallen, faith blooms, and Grace spreads out. For behold, *once again the image of Christ shines above the imperial throne* and confounds the murky heresies; while above the entrance is represented the Virgin as divine gate and guardian. The Emperor and the Bishop are depicted close by along with their

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66. Hypothetical plan of the imperial palace in Constantinople showing the proposed location of the Chrysotriklinos at no. 35. From Jean Ebersolt, *Le grand palais de Constantinople et le livre des cérémonies* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1910), 149–50.

> collaborators inasmuch as they have driven away error, and all around the building, like guards, [stand] angels, apostles, martyrs, priests. Hence we call "the new Christotriklinos" that which aforetime had been given a golden name [i.e., Chrysotriklinos], since it contains the throne of Christ, our Lord, the forms of Christ's Mother and Christ's heralds, and the image of Michael whose deeds are filled with wisdom. [italics are mine][60]

As noted in the Introduction, the centrality of the image of Christ for imperial ideology in the post-Iconoclast period is conveyed by the pun on the name of the hall: *Chryso*triklinos, or Golden Hall, becomes *Christo*triklinos, or Christ's Hall. When the emperor sat on the throne in the Chrysotriklinos, he assumed a position directly below the image of Christ. This arrangement established a visual parallel between Christ as emperor of Heaven and the emperor as Christ's representative on earth, creating a composition that recalls the image of John II Komnenos and his son Alexios (see Fig. 3).

As outlined above, in Byzantine political theory, the earthly and heavenly courts were understood as "interpenetrating" realms: The emperor was second in rank below Christ in the heavenly court, but first within the earthly court; the emperor ruled below as Christ ruled above.[61] When the emperor mounted the throne beneath the image of Christ in the Chrysotriklinos, he became the earthly reflection of the true emperor in Heaven; he served as a conduit to the divinity much in the way that a painted icon provided access to the saint it portrayed. Accounts of middle Byzantine court ceremonial make clear the essential role that this performative juxtaposition of Christ and emperor played in rituals conducted in the throne room.[62] The Christomimetic scene would have been familiar to Mesarites' well-educated, aristocratic readers because high-ranking courtiers constituted the primary audience for these imperial displays.

Returning to the description of the Mouchroutas, an expectation to see the emperor enthroned in the Chryso/Christotriklinos, below the image of Christ, would have been ingrained in the mind of the Byzantine reader, particularly the elite audience to whom Mesarites' *History* was addressed. John the Fat was positioned, however, not only outside the imperial throne room but also in an anti-Christotriklinos, below an image not of Christ but of "Persians," sitting not on a throne but on the floor. While the representation of Christ above the emperor in the Chrysotriklinos attested to the divine origin of the emperor's authority and his exalted status as Christ's representative on earth, the image of the "Persians" in the ceiling of the Mouchroutas led back to earth and to the drunken, sweaty, pathetic John the Fat.

One could take this line of reasoning one step further, extrapolating as a Byzantine viewer might have into another absent-but-present space, that of actual contemporary Islamic palaces, which the Mouchroutas was thought to imitate. One would imagine the "Persian" king sitting on the floor of his hall,

staring at the images that decorated the ceiling of his throne room and searching in vain to "understand ultimate things and to penetrate secret places."[63] But unlike the true earthly king, the Byzantine emperor, whose authority was sanctioned by God through the image of Christ guarding over his throne, the "Persian" ruler was sheltered by mere gold and paint, squatting under images, which, although beautiful to the eye, were perceived to be "on the surface" only. By recalling the contemporary "Persian" court, Mesarites' ekphrasis on the Mouchroutas might have been intended to criticize not only John the Fat, but also the Seljuq rulers to whom John the Fat was implicitly likened.

This final suggestion highlights how Mesarites' description of the Mouchroutas might be understood to employ ekphrasis as a particularly effective tool of alterity. As argued by W. J. T. Mitchell, when the object of ekphrasis is nonverbal and nonactive, it speaks only through the description of the author.[64] As such, ekphrasis functions to give voice to its object, but in so doing, ekphrasis also has the power to evacuate original agency or self-determination from the thing described. In the case of the Mouchroutas, the Islamic monument is denied its significance as an emblem of Islamic princely authority and status. Instead, its meaning is reoriented to critique the Islamic culture that produced it and the Seljuq ruler whom it was originally intended to celebrate. In other words, while it might be correct to interpret Mesarites' view of the Mouchroutas as "a piece of exotic, even decadent, orientalism,"[65] his attitude is not necessarily the result of ignorance. Rather, it might indicate a highly intentional and well-informed subversion of the original significance of Seljuq palace buildings that were the models for the Mouchroutas in order to serve the rhetorical aims of Mesarites' text to condemn John the Fat as unworthy of the Byzantine throne.

Theories of Byzantine rhetoric and visuality support the hypothesis that Mesarites would have expected his courtly, erudite audience to grasp subtle juxtapositions of Byzantine icons and Islamic wall painting, of imperial throne room and exotic pleasure palace. According to ancient and Byzantine rhetorical texts, the most effective ekphraseis were written with a sense of the "storehouse" of imagery already in the minds of the audience.[66] The author's task was to make more vivid the images in the reader's mind and to direct understanding of what was "seen" to a higher level. However, the ultimate connection between physical reality and spiritual truth was completed in the mind of the beholder, through his or her imagination.[67] Listeners were expected to link the scenes generated in their minds with the visual compendium of other images they already possessed and through these connections to discern the deeper meaning of the orator's ekphrasis.[68] It is reasonable to hypothesize that in constructing his critique of John the Fat, Mesarites anticipated not only his elite audience's familiarity with the Mouchroutas and the Chrysotriklinos – two buildings still standing in the imperial palace in the

early thirteenth century – but also his readers' familiarity with the anagogical relationship of icons to their prototypes, with the Byzantine imperial ideology of Christomimesis, and with the essential impossibility that "Persian" (Islamic) art and culture could participate in the ultimate truths of Byzantine visuality.

Mesarites' reticence to state openly his reading of the Mouchroutas is very much in keeping with middle Byzantine rhetorical strategies. For example, in a tenth-century commentary on the second- to third-century rhetorician Hermogenes (ca. 160–230), an anonymous Byzantine author proposed the usefulness of subtle and even obscure argument, stating, "when the speaker intends one thing but says another, and the listener accepts what was said, having grasped its true import, then obscurity [ἀσάφεια] becomes beneficial."[69] In this case, obscurity draws the reader deeper into the text, implicating the audience in the interpretation of the author's message.[70] A similar technique might be said to inform Mesarites' strategy of praising the aesthetic achievement of the Mouchroutas on a material level, while at the same time condemning its aesthetic shortcomings on a spiritual level. Mesarites' statement is subtle, but the audience's presumed ability to understand his true meaning made his obscurity a flourish of rhetorical virtuosity. By requiring his readers to come to their own conclusions regarding the ultimate message of his text, Mesarites engaged them in the demanding resolution of veiled allusions and subtle literary structures, exactly the kind of rhetorical techniques in which this erudite, courtly audience would have been trained themselves. When they arrived at these conclusions, the force of the argument was enhanced by the effort required to understand it.

This reading of the Mouchroutas aligns well with the intentions of ekphrasis that Mesarites himself states. In the course of his description of the Church of the Holy Apostles, he asked for divine guidance, so that his mind "may enter and gaze on the things within [the church] and may, so far as it can, furnish for its appreciative and grateful hearers a clear conception, through the description in pen and ink, of the outwardly expressed and inwardly contained meaning."[71] It would seem that attention to hidden meaning was a concern for Mesarites' ekphrasis not only of Christian works of art, but of secular and foreign works of art as well.

Mesarites' ekphrasis on the Mouchroutas Hall allows for partial recuperation of a now-lost building that attests to Byzantine emulation of Islamic architectural models in the decades leading up to the Fourth Crusade. But beyond this archaeological application, the text also provides a rare glimpse into the reception of Islamic art by a Byzantine viewer. In this way, it sheds light on the position of Islamic art within middle Byzantine aesthetics and ideologies. Mesarites uses the Mouchroutas to highlight John the Fat's unsuitability for the imperial throne by imaging his unimperial character and half-Seljuq origins. But the text also cues the audience – who would have themselves been grappling with

the instability of Byzantine power in the late twelfth century and experiencing the increasingly cosmopolitan character of the Byzantine court under the Komnenian dynasty – to a deeper meaning. Noting that the beauty and wonder of the Mouchroutas function only on the surface, Mesarites makes clear the superficial nature of this foreign work of art and draws attention to its inability to fulfill Byzantine aesthetic expectations. The ekphrasis is predicated on the listener's ability to connect Mesarites' verbal description with their own mental images of icons and imperial ceremony. The text anticipates that the audience will apply the logic of these viewing experiences to penetrate a deeper level of significance embedded in Mesarites' account.[72] Mesarites negotiates Islamic art through the conventions of Byzantine imperial imagery and ceremonial by inverting his readers' expectations for imperial Christomimesis.[73] In so doing, he employs the Mouchroutas in an unambiguous but still nuanced verbal and visual condemnation of the emperor-for-a-day, John the Fat.

The aesthetic incomparability of the Mouchroutas to Byzantine art and of John the Fat to the image of the emperor reaffirms the most essential and defining qualities of the very categories to which both the man and the monument fail to compare, concepts that may have been particularly appealing to a courtly audience bearing the strain of Byzantium's waning stature. At the same time, Mesarites attests to a Byzantine engagement with Islamic art that went beyond mere physical appreciation, anticipating his audience's ability to reflect on the meaning of "Persian" royal art and the reasons for its ultimate inability to equal that of Byzantium. Mesarites' ekphrasis on the Mouchroutas Hall inspires confidence in the notion that, despite the rarity of Byzantine written reference to Islamic art, elite Byzantine viewers were familiar with this tradition and took pains to articulate its relationship to their own artistic production. His words might be understood to parallel the silent statements of the objects considered in this book – especially the Troyes and Darmstadt Caskets – which express similar efforts to reconcile foreign artistic languages with Byzantine visual vocabularies and systems of meaning.

CONCLUSION

The Byzantine objects and monuments analyzed in this book draw from the artistic languages of cultural "others" in order to define the nature of imperial power. They contrast with the official image of the middle Byzantine emperor, which privileges a visual vocabulary of Christomimesis and divine endorsement as the defining aspects of royal imagery and ideology. Yet I do not read exoticizing works of art and architecture in strict opposition to more normative imperial works of art because all the objects and monuments discussed in this study ultimately correspond to broader trends in the promotion and formulation of the imperial image by following rhetorical strategies and ideological intentions that also feature in conventional works of Byzantine art, architecture, and literature. This is not surprising given that exoticizing motifs and programs were viewed with eyes trained by the rhetorical structures and aesthetic expectations inherent in Byzantine literary and artistic traditions, whether they drew from the Christian or the Greco-Roman aspects of Byzantine identity. At the same time, these foreign elements expand the range and content of imperial visual expression, creating a broader corpus of images and meanings than that encompassed by religious and classicizing art alone, two traditions that more commonly – and I believe insufficiently – define the parameters of what we understand to be "Byzantine art."

Viewing exoticizing objects and monuments in light of both their adherence to and expansion of the canon of imperial imagery and ideology allows

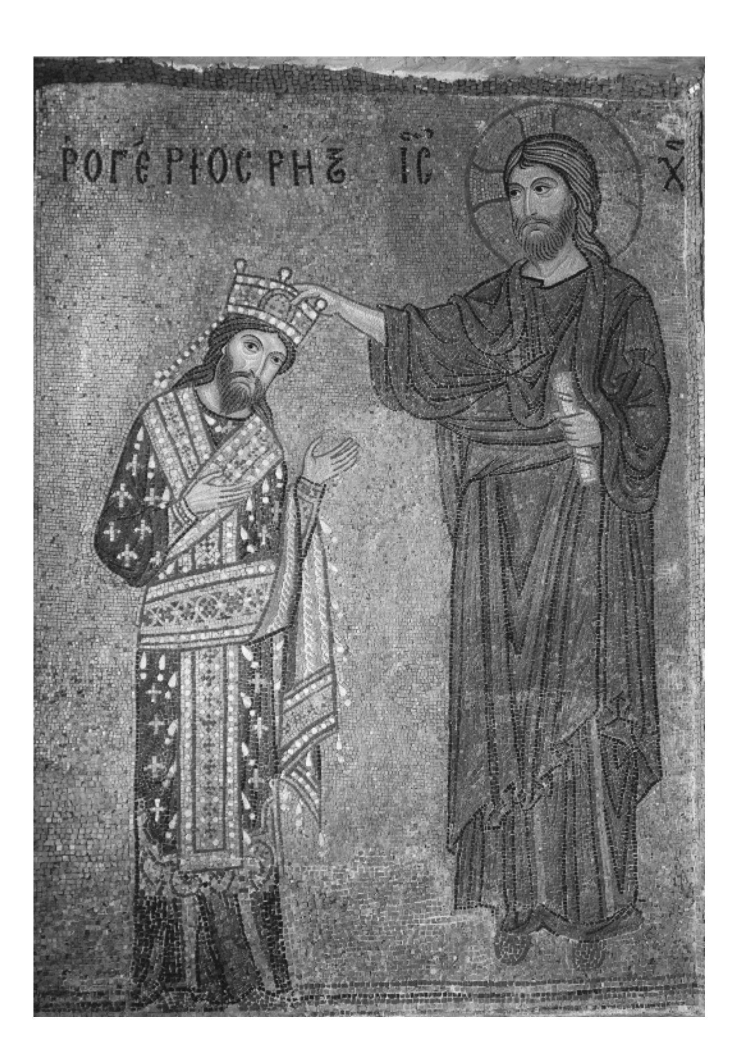
for greater appreciation of Byzantine artistic sophistication and adaptability. Foreign motifs and styles were adopted not only because of formal and aesthetic appreciation. They also contributed in meaningful ways to the programs of middle Byzantine works of art and architecture and enhance our historical perspective on Byzantine responses to foreign cultures of the Middle Ages, especially the powerful Muslim polities who were among the Byzantines' major adversaries – and sometimes allies – from the ninth to the thirteenth century. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, silks and palaces commissioned under the Iconoclast emperors that emulate Sasanian-Islamic models continue the spirit of rivalry apparent in other domains of social practice in that era, including intellectual production, diplomatic exchange, and military endeavors. The Troyes Casket, analyzed in Chapter 2, appropriates Chinese iconographic motifs, which are strategically juxtaposed with conventional scenes of the imperial hunt and triumph in order to enhance a program that celebrates dominion and expansion. Chapter 3 established how *The Book of Gifts and Rarities* bespeaks a desire to express parity through cooperative hierarchies of power across political and religious boundaries, thereby encompassing non-Christian rulers in an international community of kings. The Darmstadt Casket parallels the emperor to great heroes and model kings of the past, but also expropriates Islamic princely iconography to serve as a foil for Byzantine emblems of imperial power, as argued in Chapter 4. Finally, in Chapter 5, I described how Mesarites' presentation of the Mouchroutas Hall shows an innovative affirmation of the essential principle of imperial Christomimesis through an informative contrast with medieval Islamic ruler imagery, which he emphasizes was unable to stake a claim to a comparable relationship with divine authority.

While this evidence is insufficient to support an exact correspondence between the use of exotic elements in middle Byzantine imperial imagery and the particular fortunes of specific rulers or dynasties, general trends and attitudes can be traced in the texts, objects, and monuments surveyed in this study. Reconsideration of the chronologies for key works of art and coordination of these revised dates with the historical moments in which they were produced suggests that shifts in the representation of exotic elements parallels the transitions from the Amorian to the Macedonian to the Komnenian dynasties and the changing attitudes toward cultural others that characterized these ruling houses and their eras. The resulting outline of Byzantine interaction with foreign artistic traditions transforms from one of emulation in the ninth century toward appropriation and parity in the tenth and early eleventh centuries. All three of these strategies are generally positive in their assessment of foreign groups while still affirming the notion of Byzantine cultural and political supremacy. The late eleventh and twelfth centuries are represented by objects and monuments that demonstrate artistic expropriation and the concept of

incomparability between Byzantine and Islamic art and identity, which reveal more polemical attitudes toward cultural "others." The phenomenon of medieval cross-cultural artistic interaction was an active process, necessarily shaped by historical events. For this reason, it is not at all surprising that strategies were adapted over time and that these changes are evident in works of art. Yet these observations should not be misconstrued to limit these intercultural dynamics to a strict evolution from emulation to incomparability by way of appropriation, parity, and expropriation. Each of the strategies identified in this study could be put to effective use in any era so long as the approach served the needs and perspectives of the reigning dynasty and emperor, or the courtiers who celebrated and critiqued him.

The stylistic and iconographic diversity explored in the objects and monuments of this study, and their intentional and meaningful manipulation of exoticizing elements, is not typically identified as a feature of middle Byzantine imperial art. This kind of hybrid imagery, particularly in the sphere of ruler imagery, is more commonly associated with lesser, often peripheral, powers of the medieval Mediterranean and Near East, which drew from the visual vocabularies of contemporaneous super powers to project their own political ambitions and achievements. In twelfth-century Norman Sicily, for instance, Roger II (r. 1130–54) promoted a distinctly multicultural identity, merging Greek, Latin, and Islamic artistic traditions. A mosaic from the church of the Martorona in Palermo (Fig. 67) depicts Roger in terms almost identical to the official image of the Byzantine emperor from the mid-tenth-century ivory of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (see Fig. 2). On the one hand, this comparison demonstrates the successful dissemination of official Byzantine imagery beyond the boundaries of the empire. On the other hand, this artistic emulation can be understood as a form of political competition, a bold claim for the Normans who sought to rival Byzantine hegemony. Even more dramatic is the radically syncretic space of Roger's palace chapel, mentioned in Chapter 5, which juxtaposed the traditional cross-in-square plan and mosaic program of a middle Byzantine church at its east end with a Western basilical hall at its west end, the latter capped with an Islamic style *muqarnas* ceiling (see Fig. 62). By uniting all three traditions in a single building, Roger communicated a multicultural statement that mirrored the diverse identities of his subjects and staked a claim for his own status in relation to the foreign powers he imitated.[1] The works of art studied here show that Byzantium similarly participated in a medieval cross-cultural visual vocabulary of rulership, albeit on its own terms and with different intentions.

When a cosmopolitan attitude in ruler imagery is recognized for Byzantium, scholars tend to localize the phenomenon in the post-1204 era, after the loss of status and territory following the Sack of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade. Cross-cultural and exoticizing motifs, styles, and themes are noted with



67. Portrait of Roger II of Sicily blessed by Christ, Norman, twelfth century, Church of the Martorona, Palermo, Sicily, Italy. Photo: G. Dagli Orti. © DeA Picture Library / Art Resource, NY.

particular frequency for the court of Trebizond (1204–1461), which – located at the southeast coast of the Black Sea – was the easternmost of all the Byzantine governments in exile. Trebizond's relatively isolated geographic position contributed to popular and scholarly perception of the region as an exotic, luxurious, orientalized outpost. Even as the character of Byzantium was reconsidered and revised in scholarship of the early twentieth century, Trebizond continued to be viewed as a despotic and corrupt society.[2] Yet, as Antony Eastmond explains, this understanding of the Trapezuntine court demands reappraisal, in particular with respect to its relations with the various cultures that surrounded it, including the Christian kingdoms of the Georgians and Armenians as well as various Turkic groups, including the Artuqids and Seljuqs. Focusing on the thirteenth-century Church of Hagia Sophia in Trebizond, built by Manuel I Grand Komnenos (r. 1238–63), Eastmond shows how this monument "allows us to study a material manifestation of an imperial ideology, and to see one of

the possible paths along which Byzantine art and culture developed away from Constantinople."[3] While the Trapezuntine imperial vision entailed recapitulation of court hierarchies and ceremonial from pre-1204 Constantinople, it also drew from the visual languages of its non-Byzantine neighbors. Identifying a variety of architectural elements – including geometric decorative motifs and *muqarnas* niches – that draw from Islamic, especially Seljuq, models, Eastmond posits that these features might be best understood as the natural result of local craftsmen's participation in the building project; these artisans brought with them the regional styles and techniques of their indigenous tradition. These adoptions from the Anatolian domain, whether active or passive, may also bespeak the need to project an image that could communicate authority and power to a multicultural local audience. In this way, Eastmond argues that "Hagia Sophia presents the Byzantine power espoused by Manuel as reinterpreted by and for the inhabitants of the empire."[4] Yet the hybrid or syncretic trends observed in Trapezuntine imperial art and architecture were also possible and desirable in the pre-1204 period and within Constantinople itself. It is possible that the emperors of Trebizond continued, rather than invented, a Byzantine capacity for adopting foreign artistic languages to compose an efficacious message of imperial power.

A manuscript of the Alexander Romance (Venice, Hellenic Institute, Cod. 5), also produced in Trebizond and associated with the patronage of the emperor Alexios III (r. 1349–90), similarly shows the endurance of attitudes identified in exoticizing middle Byzantine imperial objects. The manuscript richly and extensively illustrates the tales of Alexander's heroic deeds, in particular his exploration of distant lands in his quest to expand his empire.[5] His heroism is expecially evident in the confrontation of a race of wild, hairy women, whose razor-sharp claws made them a formidable enemy (fol. 99v) (Fig. 68). The program illustrates the continued value that Alexander held as a symbol for the successful expansion of empire and the exploration of exotic, especially Eastern, regions. His role as a conqueror of uncharted lands – controlling and transforming distant places to serve his own needs and aims – projected an image of cosmopolitan rulership.

The manuscript was heavily laden with imperial ideology and aspirations that positioned Alexander as an exemplar for the Trapezuntine rulers. These associations are readily apparent in the dedication page, which portrays the recipient of the manuscript, most likely Alexios III, in the familiar regalia of the Byzantine emperor (fol. 1r) (Fig. 69) and loosely parallels a subsequent depiction of Alexander (fol. 29r) (Fig. 70).[6] The imperial image originally faced a second portrait, most likely that of Alexander himself. The juxtaposition of Alexios and Alexander, along with an inscription in Alexios's voice praising Alexander, advertises that the Byzantine emperor perceived the ancient king as a model.[7] Nicolette Trahoulia further argues that the recension of the text used for this



68. Alexander confronts a race of wild women, *The Alexander Romance*, Byzantine (Trapezuntine), second half of the fourteenth century, full page 32 by 24 cm, pigment on paper, Venice, Hellenic Institute for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies, Cod. 5, fol. 99v.

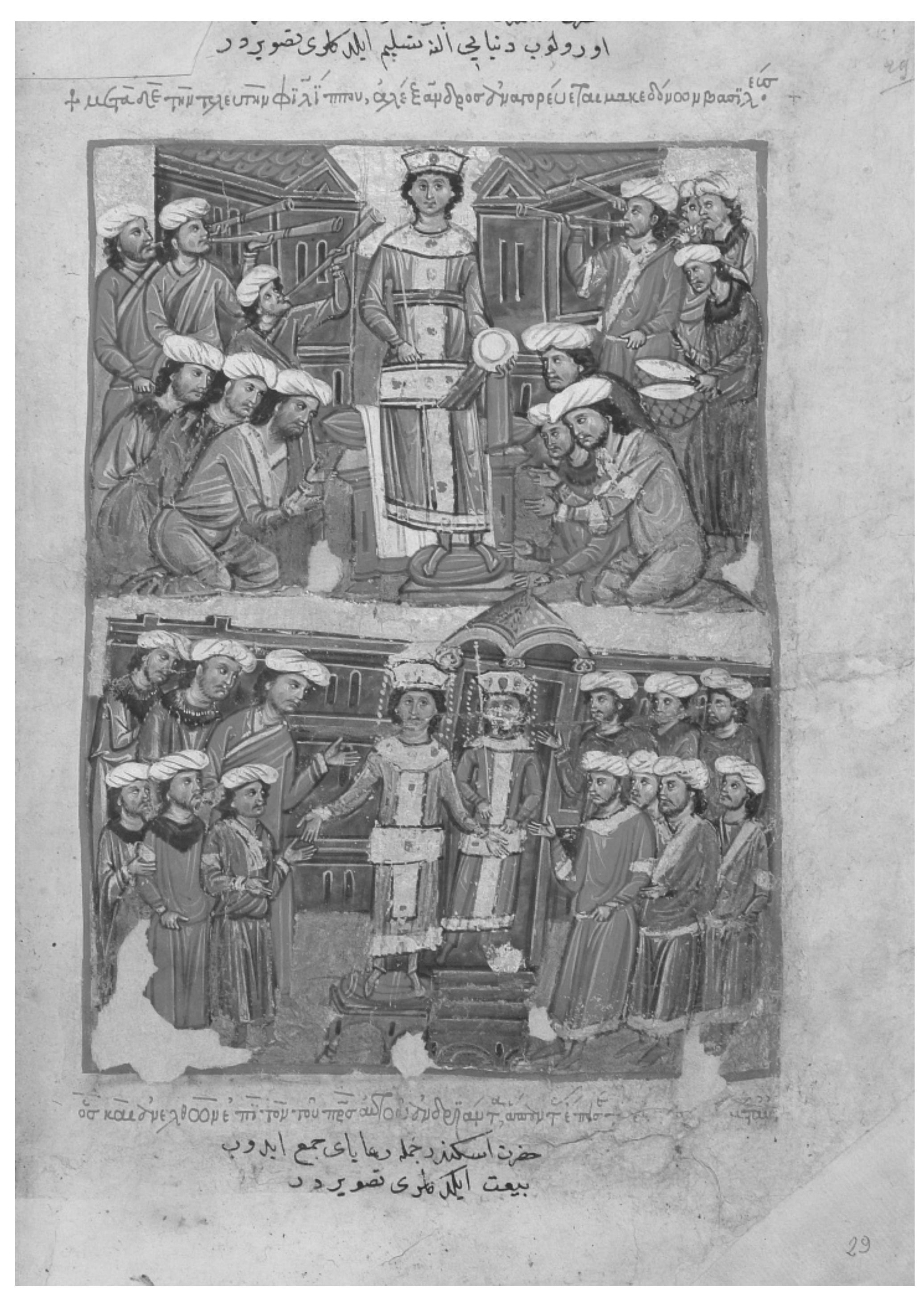
manuscript as well as the illustrations in general seek to cast Alexander in specifically Byzantine terms, further aligning him with the Trapezuntine ruler. The emperors of Trebizond, who assumed the title "autocrat of all the East" in the late thirteenth century, had especially strong motivations for promoting Alexander, conqueror of the East, as a model.[8] My own study of exoticizing elements in middle Byzantine imperial art supports Trahoulia's observation that the Trapezuntine manuscript of the Alexander Romance continues aspects of imperial ideology – especially the conquest of exotic lands and people as well as a cosmopolitan image of rulership – that began in the middle Byzantine era.[9]

This study has been concerned not with the official image of the Byzantine emperor disseminated throughout the empire and throughout the ages, but with unofficial, periodic, and flexible images of imperial authority produced in reaction to shifting circumstances and new influxes. These more versatile depictions were generated by and for an elite, although not necessarily imperial, echelon of society and reflected something of the larger reality of cross-cultural interaction that characterized the historical circumstances within which the members of Byzantine court defined themselves and their ruler. These objects and monuments demonstrate the potential responsiveness of imperial imagery, entwining the ruler in a network of iconography and ideologies circulating throughout the medieval world. They show that even the most conventional and central themes of Byzantine art could not escape impact from beyond Byzantium's borders, and that foreign elements played an important role in articulating the ideologies of Byzantine rulership that imperial works of art were intended to promote. These cross-cultural artistic interactions were not limited to meaningless "borrowings" of decorative forms, nor did they operate according to a single mode of artistic adoption. Rather, they followed varied dynamics and carried a diverse range of complex meanings.

While cross-cultural artistic interaction is greatly illuminated by consideration of contexts and texts, objects and monuments elucidate historical situations and documents in an independent and unique way. My hope is that this book contributes to greater recognition of works of art as valuable evidence for the broader exploration of intercultural dynamics in the medieval world. This study attempts to move discussion of medieval cross-cultural interaction from the peripheries of scholarly discourse and the margins of medieval experience to the most central and powerful spaces, like the court of Constantinople, and the most conventional artistic traditions, like the image of the Byzantine emperor. By adopting foreign styles and iconographies to articulate a message of universal dominion, Byzantine patrons and designers demonstrated a responsiveness to and absorption of other cultures as well as a sophisticated



69. Portrait of Alexios III, *The Alexander Romance*, Byzantine (Trapezuntine), second half of the fourteenth century, full page 32 by 24 cm, pigment on paper, Venice, Hellenic Institute for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies, Cod. 5, fol. 1r.



70. The crowning of Alexander, *The Alexander Romance*, Byzantine (Trapezuntine), second half of the fourteenth century, full page 32 by 24 cm, pigment on paper, Venice, Hellenic Institute for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies, Cod. 5, fol. 29r.

negotiation of exotic sources to create uniquely Byzantine meanings. In sum, the strength of the Byzantine Empire and the efficacy of the imperial image can be found in part where André Grabar localized it over seventy years ago, in its formulaic adherence to authoritative precedent, but its strength also derived from adaptability to new forms and openness to change. Indeed, one strategy would not have likely succeeded without the other.

APPENDIX

Excerpt describing the Mouchroutas Hall from Nikolaos Mesarites, *The Palace Revolution of John Komnenos*.[1]

27. From that point on, the doors of the palace lay open and unguarded, the Triklinos of Justinian [a hall in the imperial palace] being stripped of men. An assault was made on the Chrysotriklinos and the soldiers spread out as they charged the corners of the palace, piercing with swords and cutting down to pieces those who huddled together in fear. But the soldiers were still made nervous by the small number coming out to meet them face to face. On account of this they held back, being anxious lest some ambush, or some secret scheme, or plot was lying in wait somewhere. Therefore, because of the dearth of pursuers, the shield-bearers of John, seized by fear, proceeded up to the Mouchroutas. The Mouchroutas is an enormous hall, next to the Chrysotriklinos, located on the westerly side. The steps to this hall are made from baked brick, gypsum, and marble. The staircase bears chevron ornaments on either side and turns in a circle.[2] It is painted with dark blue, shining with deep red, dyed with green, blooming with purple from mixed, cross-shaped tiles joined together. The chamber was the work not of a Roman, Sicilian, Celt, Sybarite, Cypriot, or a Cilician hand, but rather of a Persian hand, because it bears figures of Persians and their various costumes. Everywhere on the ceiling are scenes of various types applied to the heaven-shaped ceiling made of hemispheres. The recesses and projections of the angles are densely packed. The beauty of the carving is extraordinary, the spectacle of the concave spaces is delightful; overlaid with gold, it produces the effect of a rainbow more colorful than the one in the clouds. There is insatiable pleasure – not hidden, but on the surface – not just for those who for the first time direct their gaze upon it, but also for those who visit it frequently [it evokes] amazement and surprise. This Persian hall is more delightful than the Lakonian ones of Menelaus.

28. This Persian stage – the work of the hand of John's kinsman from his grandfather's family – framed the actor John. Although crowned, he was not dressed royally, sitting on the ground, a symbol of the suffering, which had seized the wretch, and of the unbearableness of his misfortune. He was gulping his drink quickly and courting favor with the Persians painted on the chamber

and drinking to them. Running with sweat, he sometimes wiped the sweat with a towel, sometimes flicked the sweat away with his crooked finger; already he was passing into a very deep sleep.

27. Ἠνεῳγμένα τὸ ἀπὸ τοῦδε τὰ τῶν ἀνακτόρων θύρετρα καὶ ἀφύλακτα, ὁ Ἰουστινιάνειος τρίκλινος γεγυμνωμένος ἀνδρῶν. ἐπὶ τὸν Χρυσοτρίκλινον ἡ ὁρμὴ καὶ σποράδην ἡ τῶν στρατιωτῶν ῥύμη ἐπὶ τᾶς γωνίας τῶν ἀνακτόρων, τοὺς τῷ φόβῳ σεσωρευμένους κατασπαθίζουσά τε καὶ κατακόπτουσα. ἀλλὰ δεδοίκει πάλιν ἡ στρατιὰ τῷ ὀλιγαρίθμῳ τῶν ὑπαντιαζόντων αὐτοῖς κατὰ πρόσωπον· διά τοι τοῦτο καὶ συνεστέλλετο ἐννοουμένη, μή που ἐνέδρά τις ἐστὶν ἐλλοχῶσα, μὴ λαθραία τις σκέψις, μὴ διαβούλιον. τοίνυν καὶ κατὰ πολλὴν τοῦ διώκοντος ἐρημίαν οἱ τῷ φόβῳ κατειλημμένοι τοῦ Ἰωάννου ὑπασπισταὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ἄνοδον προεχώρουν τοῦ Μουχρουτᾶ. ὁ δὲ Μουχρουτᾶς ἔστι τι δῶμα τεράστιον, τοῦ Χρυσοτρικλίνου ἁπτόμενον, ὡς πρὸς δυσμὴν διακείμενον. αἱ πρὸς τοῦτον βαθμίδες ἐξ ὀπτῆς πλίνθου καὶ τιτάνων καὶ μαρμάρων πεποιημέναι, ἡ κλῖμαξ ἔνθεν κἀκεῖθεν ὀδοντουμένη περιγυρουμένη, κεχρωσμένη τῷ κυανῷ, τῷ βυσσίνῳ λελευκασμένη, βεβαμμένη τῷ χλοανῷ, ἐξανθοῦσα τῷ πορφυρίζοντι ἐξ ἐγκεκολαμμένων συμμίκτων βεβαμμένων ὀστράκων σχῆμ᾿ ἐχόντων σταυρότυπον. τὸ οἴκημα χειρὸς ἔργον οὐ Ῥωμαΐδος, οὐ Σικελικῆς, οὐ Κελτίβηρος, οὐ Συβαριτικῆς, οὐ Κυπρίου, οὐ Κίλικος· Περσικῆς μὲν οὖν, ὅτι καὶ ἰδέας φέρει Περσῶν παραλλαγάς τε στολῶν. αἱ τοῦ ὀρόφου σκηναὶ παντοδαπαὶ καὶ ποικίλαι, ἐξ ἡμισφαιρίων τῷ οὐρανοειδεῖ ὀρόφῳ προσηλωμέναι, πυκναὶ αἱ τῶν γωνιῶν εἰσοχαί τε καὶ ἐξοχαί, κάλλος τῶν γλυφίδων ἀμήχανον, τῶν κοιλωμάτων θέαμα πάντερπνον, ἶριν φαντάζον πολυχρωμοτέραν τῆς ἐν τοῖς νέφεσι, χρυσοῦ τούτῳ ὑπεστρωμένου. οὐκ ἐς βάθος, κατ᾿ἐπιφάνειαν ἀκόρεστος τερπωλή, οὐ τοῖς ἄρτι πρώτως τὴν ὁρατικὴν πέμπουσιν εἰς αὐτά, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς συχνὰ παραβάλλουσι θάμβος καὶ ἔκπληξις. τερπνότερος ὁ Περσικὸς οὗτος δόμος τῶν Λακωνικῶν ἐκείνων τῶν τοῦ Μενέλεω.

28. Εἶχεν οὖν ἡ Περσικὴ σκηνὴ τὸν σκηνικὸν Ἰωάννην, τὸ τῆς πρὸς πάππου συγγενικῆς ἔργον χειρός, τεταινιωμένον οὐκ ἐστολισμένον βασιλκῶς, ἐφιζημένον χαμαί, σύμβολον τοῦτο τοῦ κατειληφότος τὸν ἄθλιον πάθους καὶ τοῦ ἀφορήτου τῆς συμφορᾶς, ἀναρροφῶντα πυκνὰ καὶ τοῖς ἐγγεγραμμένοις τῷ δόμῳ Πέρσαις χαριζόμενον τε καὶ τούτοις προπίνοντα, πολλῷ περ ἱδρῶτι καταρρεόμενον καὶ διὰ χειρομάκτρου ποτέ μεν τὸν ἱδρῶτα ἐκμάσσοντα, ἔστι δ᾿ ὅτε καὶ ὑπ᾿ἀγκύλῳ τῷ δακτύλῳ τοῦτον ἐκσφενδονοῦντα μακράν, ἤδη δὲ πρὸς ὕπνον τραπῆναι μέλλοντα ἐγγὺς ἀδιύπνιστον.[3]

NOTES

PREFACE

1. The importance of this topic is evident in its selection for the inaugural annual symposium of Byzantine studies at Dumbarton Oaks in 1950, "The Emperor and the Palace," and by the plethora of scholarly publications and meetings devoted to the complex nature of Byzantium imperial ideology and imagery that have followed in its wake.
2. For studies of imperial portraits, see Iohannis Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts* (Leiden: Brill, 1976); and Constance Head, *Imperial Byzantine Portraits: A Verbal and Graphic Gallery* (New Rochelle: Caratzas Brothers, 1982).
3. For important recent studies on the definition and evolution of Byzantine identity, see Anthony Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Gill Page, *Being Byzantine: Greek Identity before the Ottomans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and Claudia Rapp, "Hellenic Identity, *Romanitas*, and Christianity in Byzantium," in *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. Katerina Zacharia, pp. 127–47 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).
4. The most comprehensive study of the textual evidence for Byzantine–Islamic relations remains Aleksandr A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, trans. and rev. Marius Canard et al., 3 vols. (Brussels: Institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales, 1935–68). Also see Hamilton A. R. Gibb, "The Relations between Byzantium and the Arabs: Report on the Dumbarton Oaks Symposium of 1963," *DOP* 18 (1964): 363–5, and additional papers in that volume; and the collected works of Marius Canard, *Byzance et les musulmans du Proche Orient* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1973). Recent studies include Nadia M. El Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).
5. For an account of Byzantine–Sasanian interactions, especially as concerns ruler iconography and ideology, see Matthew Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).
6. This is not surprising, however, because luxury and imperial works of art from the Byzantine world do not survive in large numbers. As Paul Magdalino and Robert Nelson note, "the study of Byzantine imperial art depends to a much greater extent on a knowledge of what has been lost." "The Emperor in Byzantine Art of the Twelfth Century," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 8 (1982): 123–83 at 123. Rates of preservation for specific media are difficult to estimate, but one hypothesis places the percentage of extant enamelware at as little as 1 to 3 percent of the original corpus. Paul Hetherington, "Byzantine Cloisonné Enamel: Production, Survival, and Loss," *Byzantion* 76 (2006): 185–215 at 212–13.
7. Paul Magdalino, "The Road to Baghdad in the Thought-World of Ninth-Century Byzantium," in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?* ed. Leslie Brubaker, pp. 195–214 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 196.
8. This approach is particularly evident in André Grabar's seminal analysis of "oriental" artistic "influences" on Byzantine art, which continues to affect the way scholars interpret Byzantine intercultural artistic exchange, a point discussed further in the Introduction. See esp. André Grabar, "Le succès des arts orientaux à la cour byzantine sous les Macédoniens," *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 2 (1951): 265–90; and Grabar, "Le rayonnement de l'art sassanide dans le monde chrétienne," in *Atti del Convegno internazionale sul tema la Persia nel Medioevo*, pp. 679–707 (Rome: Accademia

nazionale dei Lincei, 1971). For further consideration of this issue, see Alicia Walker, "Meaningful Mingling: Classicizing Imagery and Islamicizing Script in a Byzantine Bowl," *The Art Bulletin* 90.1 (2008): 32–53, esp. 32–4. Recent overviews of Byzantine–Islamic artistic interaction tend to be limited to exhibition catalogues. For example, see Priscilla Soucek, "Byzantium and the Islamic East," in *GOB*, 402–11; and Anna Ballian, "Byzantium and Islam: Relationships and Convergences," in *Byzantium: An Oecumenical Empire*, ed. Despoina Evgenidou, pp. 231–38 (Athens: Hellenic Ministry of Culture, 2002).

9. My use of these terms responds to the work of André Grabar, especially his seminal study *L'Empereur dans l'art byzantin: Recherches sur l'art officiel de l'Empire d'Orient* (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1936), in which he establishes standards for the form and content of "official" imperial imagery. My definitions of "official" and "unofficial" resonate with those proposed by Eunice and Henry Maguire in their study of Byzantine "secular" art, particularly to the extent that they understand official and unofficial art to be mutually dependent, with one shaping and informing the parameters and meaning of the other. *Other Icons: Art and Power in Byzantine Secular Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), esp. 1 and 159. Like them, I believe that recognition of the unofficial domain as a separate but related sphere expands and enriches our understanding of the more familiar material of the official realm. My definition differs, however, in that I do not see unofficial to be synonymous with "secular" or "profane," or to be defined primarily by contrast with the "sacred." In this respect, I endorse Anthony Cutler's position that the imperial image embodies a nexus of values, meanings, and practices that defy easy division between secular and sacred and in fact attest to the lack of such distinction in Byzantine perception. "Sacred and Profane: The Locus of the Political in Middle Byzantine Art," in *Arte profana e arte sacra a Bisanzio*, ed. Antonio Iacobini and Enrico Zanini, pp. 315–38 (Rome: Argos, 1995).

10. I employ this distilled definition of "style" while recognizing the longstanding and productive debate surrounding the term and its use. For discussion of "style" in art history and related fields, see Whitney Davis, "Style and History in Art History," in *The Uses of Style in Archaeology*, ed. Margaret W. Conkey and Christine A. Hastorf, pp. 18–31 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

11. Regarding the role of designers in Byzantine artistic production, see Anthony Cutler, *The Hand of the Master: Craftsmanship, Ivory, and Society in Byzantium (9th–11th Centuries)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 155. Also see Cutler, "Makers & Users," in *A Companion to Byzantium*, ed. Liz James, pp. 301–12 (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2010).

12. Helen Evans, "Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)*, ed. Helen Evans, pp. 4–15 (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004), 5.

13. These affiliations with Roman and ancient Greek culture were, however, complicated and shifted significantly over time. For the most recent consideration of this complex question, see Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*.

14. For extended discussion of this issue, see Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*.

15. Liliana Simeonova, "Constantinopolitan Attitudes toward Aliens and Minorities, 860s–1020s, Part One," *Études balkaniques* 3 (2000): 91–112, esp. 92. As Simeonova notes, concepts of "otherness" in Byzantium were applied not only to people from foreign cultures. The term *xenoi* (outsiders), for example, could refer to those from other cultural and/or geographic origins as well as people from other areas of the empire and even people who were outside "normal" society, such as the indigent and the insane. For extended consideration of the "other" in Byzantium and its complex formulations that extended far beyond a simple notion of "foreigners," see the collections of essays Hélène Ahrweiler and Angeliki Laiou, eds., *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997); and Margaret Mullet, "The 'Other' in Byzantium," in *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider*, ed. Dion C. Smythe, pp. 1–22 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

16. The need to read medieval identities as constituted and relational in nature is expertly articulated by Finbarr B. Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), esp. 3–4.

17. Criticism of the tendency in nineteenth-century Western scholarship to group all "Eastern" cultures into an "oriental" monolith

was a central point of Edward Said's seminal study *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) and is an equally relevant issue with regard to how scholarship on medieval cross-cultural relations tends to represent the Islamic world. Concerning the relevance of Said to medieval studies more broadly, see the papers delivered in the conference session "Orientalism and Nationalism in Byzantine Scholarship," *Abstracts of Papers: Twenty-Fourth Annual Byzantine Studies Conference, November 6–9, 1998* (n.p., 1998), 58–62; and Lucy K. Pick, "Edward Said, *Orientalism* and the Middle Ages," *Medieval Encounters* 5.3 (1999): 265–71.

18. For discussion of the term "Islamic" and its use within art history, see Oleg Grabar, "Islamic Art: Introduction; Definition," in *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. J. Turner, 34 vols. (London: Grove's Dictionaries, 1996), vol. 16, 99–102.
19. See, for example, the tenth-century emperor Constantine VII's discussion of the diversity among Islamic groups in his treatise on political administration, *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. G. Moravcsik and trans. R. Jenkins (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1967), 106–9, lines 56–85 (ch. 25). For new analysis of middle Byzantine classification of and terminology for medieval Islamic groups see Koray Durak, "Defining the 'Turk': Mechanisms of Establishing Contemporary Meaning in the Archaizing Language of the Byzantines," *JÖB* 59 (2009): 65–78.
20. Regarding an expanded definition of late antiquity that incorporates Sasanian and Umayyad-Abbasid traditions, see G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar, eds., *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1999), esp. ix–x.
21. Regarding this simultaneously destructive and creative nature of translation and its inevitable domestication of the foreign, see Ovidio Carbonell, "The Exotic Space of Cultural Translation," in *Translation, Power, Subversion*, ed. Roman Alvarez and Carmen-Africa Vidal, pp. 79–98 (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1996). For a rigorous discussion of the benefits and challenges of applying translation theory to the study of medieval cross-cultural artistic interactions, see Flood, *Objects of Translation*, esp. 8–9.
22. For discussion of hybridity as a force that generates identity through the negotiation of difference, see D. A. Kapchan and P. T. Strong, "Theorizing the Hybrid," *The Journal of American Folklore* 112.115 (1999): 239–53, and additional essays in that volume. Regarding the diverse significances associated with "hybridity" in art-historical studies and its problematic assumption of preexisting "pure" cultural forms, see Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn, "Hybridity and Its Discontents: Considering Visual Culture in Colonial Spanish America," *Colonial Latin American Review* 12.1 (2003): 5–35. For further consideration of the application of the term "hybrid" to the interpretation of medieval art, see Flood, *Objects of Translation*, esp. 5; and Alicia Walker, "Cross-cultural Reception in the Absence of Texts: The Islamic Appropriation of a Middle Byzantine Rosette Casket," *Gesta* 47.2 (2008): 99–122, esp. 99 and 116–17nn2 and 3.
23. Jonathan Hay, "Toward a Theory of the Intercultural," *Res* 35 (1999): 5–9. Also see Stephen William Foster, "The Exotic as a Symbolic System," *Dialectical Anthropology* 7 (1982): 21–30.
24. I avoid the term "exoticism" because of its longstanding association with late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European colonialism, imperialism, and orientalism. Although productive conceptual resonance exists between the Byzantine use of foreign artistic elements and the adoption of exotic features in modern European art, radical differences in their sociohistorical contexts preclude their direct comparison, and reliance on a modern European model risks undermining the independent analysis of uniquely Byzantine phenomena.
25. In this respect, my definition of cosmopolitanism departs from the popular conception of the term as a self-consciously liberal and ostensibly positive ethos characterized by "the thirst for another knowledge, unprejudiced striving, world travel, supple open-mindedness, broad international norms of civic equality, a politics of treaty and understanding rather than conquest." Timothy Burton, "Cosmo-Theory," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 100.3 (2001): 659–91, at 659.
26. On the local, self-interested character of cosmopolitanism, see Burton, "Cosmo-theory," 559–661 and 667–8.
27. Regarding the diversity of "cosmopolitanisms" in history and practice, see Sheldon Pollock et al., "Cosmopolitanisms," in *Cosmopolitanism*, special issue of *Public Culture* 12.3 (2000): 577–89, esp. 584 and 586–7.
28. For an extended discussion of terminology for analyzing distinct instances of cross-cultural

artistic exchange in the medieval world, see Alicia Walker, "Patterns of Flight: Middle Byzantine Appropriation of the Chinese *Feng-huang* Bird," *Ars Orientalis* 38 (2010): 188–216, with additional bibliography.

29. My use of the term "emulation" parallels one of the modern definitions of the word: "ambition or endeavor to equal or excel others" (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*), but is also informed by the Roman concept of *aemulatio* as a form of rivalry that might involve the imitation (*imitatio*) – but does not imply the blind following – of a given model. See Peter Green, "Caesar and Alexander: *Aemulatio*, *Imitatio*, *Comparatio*," *American Journal of Ancient History* 3 (1978): 1–26, esp. 2, 5, and 18n17; and Elaine Gazda, "Roman Sculpture and the Ethos of Emulation: Reconsidering Repetition," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 97 (1995): 121–56.
30. As such, I ascribe to appropriation a more limited scope than the far-reaching variations explored in the important discussion of Kathleen Ashley and Véronique Plesch, "The Cultural Process of 'Appropriation,'" *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32.1 (2002): 1–15. In particular, I identify "expropriation" as an extreme – and adoption as a more neutral – strategy distinct from appropriation. Also see Robert Nelson, "Appropriation," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert Nelson and Richard Shiff, pp. 116–28 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
31. I draw here from the definition of "expropriation" proposed by Eva Hoffman, "Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian Interchange from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century," *Art History* 24.1 (1999): 17–50 at 30.
32. On the problematic nature of the concept of "influence," see Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 58–62.
33. On this point, also see Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 14.

INTRODUCTION

1. Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire: 312–1453* (1972; reprint, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 160; and *CSHB*, vol.33, with corrections in K. Kumaniecki, "Notes critiques sur le texte de Théophane Continué," *Byzantion* 7 (1932): 235–7.
2. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 229; Nikolaos Mesarites, *Die Palastrevolution des Joannes Komnenos*, ed. A. Heisenberg (Würzburg: H. Stürtz, 1907), 44–5; and Mesarites, *Die Palastrevolution des Johannes Komnenos*, ed. and trans. Franz Grabler (Graz: Verlag Styria, 1958).
3. Regarding the role of palaces as "official images of kingship" in the premodern eastern Mediterranean and Near East, see Gülru Necipoğlu, "An Outline of Shifting Paradigms in the Palatial Architecture of the Pre-modern Islamic World," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 3–24, and additional essays in that volume. For the role of imperial architectural commissions in the discourse of imperial power during the Byzantine period, see Paul Magdalino, "The Bath of Leo the Wise and the 'Macedonian Renaissance' Revisited: Topography, Iconography, Ceremonial, Ideology," *DOP* 42 (1988): 97–188; and Jaś Elsner, "The Rhetoric of Buildings in the *De Aedificiis* of Procopius," in *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture*, ed. Liz James, pp. 33–57 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
4. This same iconography also appears in imperial seals, see John Nesbitt, ed., *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art*, vol. 6: *Emperors, Patriarchs of Constantinople, Addenda* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2009).
5. *DOC*, vol. 3, pt. 2, 593; plt. XLII, no. 1.c; and *DOC*, vol. 4, pt. 1, 257; pt. 2, pl. VII, no. 2.10.
6. The divinely ordained, Christomimetic nature of Byzantine imperial ideology was first articulated by Bishop Eusebius, adviser to Constantine I (r. 308–37). See Hélène Ahrweiler, "Eusebius of Caesarea and the Imperial Christian Idea," in *Caesarea Maritima: A Retrospective after Two Millennia*, ed. Avner Raban and Kenneth G. Holum, pp. 541–8 (Brill: Leiden, 1996). For a nuanced discussion of the Christomimetic nature of imperial imagery in the middle Byzantine period, see Henry Maguire, "The Heavenly Court," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire, pp. 247–58 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997). Also see George Ostrogorsky, "The Byzantine Emperor and the Hierarchical World Order," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 35 (1956–7): 1–14, esp. 2–5.
7. Regarding the propagandistic nature of Byzantine coins which served as "icons" of imperial ideologies, see Alfred R. Bellinger,

"The Coins and Imperial Policy," *Speculum* 31.1 (1956): 70–81.

8. Ioli Kalavrezou, "Plaque Fragment with Christ Crowning Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos Emperor," in *GOB*, 203–4, cat. no. 140; and Jeffrey Anderson, "The Gospels of John II Komnenos," in *GOB*, 209–10, cat. no. 144.
9. Henry Maguire, "Style and Ideology in Byzantine Imperial Art," *Gesta* 28.2 (1989): 217–31; Maguire, "Images of the Court," in *GOB*, 183–91, esp. 184–5; Maguire and Maguire, *Other Icons*, 141–5; and Tirnanić, "Divine Images and Earthly Authority at the Chora Parakklesion in Constantinople," in *Negotiating Secular and Sacred in Medieval Art*, ed. Alicia Walker and Amanda Luyster, pp. 75–101 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009).
10. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 184; Michael J. Featherstone, "The Chrysotriklinos Seen through *De Cerimoniis*," in *Zwischen Polis, Provinz und Peripherie: Beiträge zur byzantinischen Geschichte und Kultur*, ed. Lars M. Hoffmann, pp. 845–52 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005); and Gilbert Dagron, "Trônes pour un empereur," in *Byzantium: State and Society*, ed. Anna Avramea et al., pp. 179–203 (Athens: Institute for Byzantine Studies, 2003), esp. 191–201.
11. *DOC*, vol. 3, pt. 2, 759–60, plt. LXIII, 2.1, 2.4, and 2.5; and Alexander Kazhdan, "Certain Trends of Imperial Propaganda in the Byzantine Empire from the Eighth to the Fifteenth Century," in *Prédication et propagande au Moyen Age: Islam, Byzance, Occident*, ed. George Makdisi et al., pp. 13–28 (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1983), 14.
12. That is, unless they were purposeful subversions intended to criticize or condemn an individual judged unworthy of the imperial office. On this point, see Maguire, "Images of the Court," 185–8; and Antony Eastmond, "An Intentional Error? Imperial Art and 'Mis'-Interpretation under Andronikos I Komnenos," *The Art Bulletin* 76.3 (1994): 502–10. Byzantine imperial imagery could also be deployed in irregular ways by cultural groups that were familiar with its artistic conventions but free of its social strictures. For example, see Elena Boeck, "The Politics of Visualizing an Imperial Demise: Transforming a Byzantine Chronicle into a Sicilian Visual Narrative," *Word and Image* 25.3 (2009): 243–57.
13. For example, see Grabar, "Analogies tirées de l'histoire, de la mythologie et de la Bible," in *L'Empereur*, 93–97; Anthony Cutler, "The Psalter of Basil II," *Arte Veneta* 30 (1976): 9–19; Ioli Kalavrezou et al., "Critique of the Emperor in the Vatican Psalter gr. 752," *DOP* 47 (1993): 195–219; Nicolette Trahoulia, *The Greek Alexander Romance* (Athens: Exandas, 1997); Maguire, "Images of the Court," 188–9; Maguire, "Davidic Virtue: The Crown of Constantine Monomachos and Its Images," *Jewish Art* 28.4 (1997/8): 117–23; Maguire and Maguire, *Other Icons*, 141–5; and Claudia Rapp, "Old Testament Models for Emperors in Early Byzantium," in *The Old Testament in Byzantium*, ed. Paul Magdalino and Robert Nelson, pp. 175–97 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010).
14. See Hélène Ahrweiler, *L'Idéologie politique de l'Empire byzantin* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1975); Magdalino and Nelson, "The Emperor in Byzantine Art of the Twelfth Century," 123–83; Paul Magdalino, "Aspects of Twelfth-Century Byzantine *Kaiserkritik*," *Speculum* 58.2 (1983): 326–46; Kazhdan, "Certain Trends of Imperial Propaganda in the Byzantine Empire," 13–28; Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Catherine Jolivet-Levy, "L'Image du pouvoir dans l'art byzantin à l'époque de la dynastie macédonienne (867–1056)," *Byzantion* 57 (1987): 441–70; Paul Magdalino, ed., *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th Centuries* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994); and Dimiter Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium (1204–1330)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

    Scholarly recognition of the changing nature of imperial authority is also evident in recent studies of the reigns of individual middle Byzantine emperors, including Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Shaun Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI (886–912): Politics and People* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Paul Stephenson, *The Legend of Basil the Bulgar-Slayer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Catherine Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976–1025)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
15. Art-historical studies that touch on this issue include: David Talbot Rice, "Eastern and

Western Elements in the Decoration of the Troyes Casket," *Starinar* 20 (1969): 347–53; Lucy-Anne Hunt, "Comnenian Aristocratic Palace Decoration: Descriptions and Islamic Connections," in *The Byzantine aristocracy IX to XIII centuries*, ed. Michael Angold, *BAR International Series*, 221, pp. 138–57 (Oxford: B.A.R., 1984); Charles Barber, "Reading the Garden in Byzantium: Nature and Sexuality," *BMGS* 16 (1992): 1–19; and Henry Maguire, "Imperial Gardens and the Rhetoric of Renewal," in *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th Centuries*, ed. Paul Magdalino, pp. 181–98 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994).

16. I adopt this well-known phrase from Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

17. For the Armenians, see Lynn Jones, *Between Islam and Byzantium: Aght'amar and the Visual Construction of Medieval Armenian Rulership* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007). For Norman Sicily, see William Tronzo, *The Cultures of His Kingdom: Roger II and the Cappella Palatina in Palermo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); and Jeremy Johns, *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily: the Royal Dīwān* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). On the subject of multicultural or cosmopolitan images of medieval rulership in other medieval contexts, see especially Bianca Kühnel, "The Kingly Statement of the Bookcovers of Queen Melisende's (1131–53) Psalter," in *Tesserae: Festschrift für Josef Engemann*, pp. 340–57 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1991); Daniel Weiss, "The Three Solomon Portraits in the Arsenal Old Testament and the Construction of Meaning in Crusader Painting," *Arte Medievale* 6.2 (1992): 15–38; Antony Eastmond, *Royal Imagery in Medieval Georgia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998); and Elena Boeck, "Simulating the Hippodrome: The Performance of Power in Kiev's St. Sophia," *The Art Bulletin* 91.3 (2009): 283–301.

18. For the depiction of prostrate barbarians in Roman art, see I. M. Ferris, *Enemies of Rome: Barbarians through Roman Eyes* (Stroud: Sutton, 2000).

19. Linda Safran, "Points of View: The Theodosian Obelisk Base in Context," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 34 (1993): 409–35, with earlier bibliography; and Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, 111–15. Regarding Roman-Byzantine attitudes toward barbarians (and vice versa) in the fourth and fifth centuries, see Peter Heather, "The Barbarian in Late Antiquity: Image, Reality, and Transformation," in *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity*, ed. Richard Miles, pp. 234–58 (London: Routledge, 1999).

20. The pointed caps of the figures to the right indicate their Persian origin. For an alternate identification of the two groups as "Indians and Germans," see I. Spatharakis, "The Proskynesis in Byzantine Art: A Study in Connection with a Nomisma of Andronicus II Palaeologue," *Bulletin antieke beschaving* 49 (1974): 190–205 at 192.

21. Anthony Cutler, "Barberiniana: Notes on the Making, Content, and Provenance of Louvre, OA.9063," in *Tesserae: Festschrift für Josef Engemann*, pp. 329–39 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1991); and Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, 115–21.

22. Grant Parker, *The Making of Roman India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 128–31.

23. One possible exception proves this rule. The manuscript portrait of Basil II (r. 963–1025) (Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, ms. gr. z 17, fol. 3r) depicts the emperor standing before a group of prostrate figures who may be barbarian supplicants, an interpretation suggested by the pseudo-Arabic inscribed arm bands adorning the sleeves of certain figures' gowns and the fact that some members of the group wear earrings, which were not typical adornments of Byzantine courtiers. It should be noted, however, that all subjects of the emperor practiced *proskynesis* (prostration) in his presence, raising the possibility that the depicted figures may be members of the emperor's court or emissaries from client states. Regarding this manuscript and its illuminations, see Anthony Cutler, *The Aristocratic Psalters in Byzantium* (Paris: Picard, 1984), 115–19, esp. 116. For discussion of the *proskynesis* scene, see Spatharakis, "The Proskynesis in Byzantine Art," 197–8.

24. Regarding the diminished physical extent of the Byzantine empire in the middle Byzantine era and the periodic revival of a rhetoric of imperial expansionism despite this reality, see Jonathan Shepard, "Emperors and Expansionism: From Rome to Middle Byzantium," in *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, ed. David Abulafia and Nora Berend,

pp. 55–82 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), esp. 60 and 66–79.

25. For an overview of the structure and major characteristics of the Byzantine court and its changing character over time, see Alexander Kazhdan and Michael McCormick, "The Social World of the Byzantine Court," in *Byzantine Court Culture*, ed. Henry Maguire, pp. 167–98 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1994); and Paul Magdalino, "Court Society and Aristocracy," in *The Social History of Byzantium*, ed. John Haldon, pp. 212–32 (Malden, Mass.: Wiley Blackwell, 2009).

26. Regarding the Byzantine court and its cosmopolitan nature, see select essays in Michael Angold, ed., *The Byzantine aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries*, *BAR International Series*, 221 (Oxford: B.A.R, 1984); and Maguire, *Byzantine Court Culture*. Regarding cosmopolitanism as a defining feature of medieval court culture more broadly, see esp. Hoffman, "Pathways of Portability."

27. See Charles Brand, "The Turkish Element in Byzantium, Eleventh-Twelfth Centuries," *DOP* 43 (1989): 1–25; Oleg Grabar, "The Shared Culture of Objects," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire, pp. 115–30 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997); Anthony Cutler, "Les échanges de dons entre Byzance et l'Islam (IXe–XIe siècles)," *Journal des savants* 1 (1996): 51–66; Cutler, "The Parallel Universes of Arab and Byzantine Art (with special reference to the Fatimid Era," in *L'Egypte Fatimide son art et son histoire*, ed. Marianne Barrucand, pp. 635–48 (Paris: Presse de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1999); Nevra Necipoğlu, "The Coexistence of Turks and Greeks in Medieval Anatolia (Eleventh–Twelfth Centuries)," *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 5 (1999–2000): 58–76; Liliana Simeonova, "Foreigners in Tenth-Century Byzantium: A Contribution to the History of Cultural Encounter," in *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider*, ed. Dion C. Smythe, pp. 229–44 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); Cutler, "Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine, Arab, and Related Economies," *DOP* 55 (2001): 247–78; Cutler, "Visual Communities in Byzantium and Medieval Islam," in *Visions of Community in the Pre-modern World*, ed. Nicholas Howe, pp. 37–74 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002); and Glaire Anderson, "Islamic Spaces and Diplomacy in Constantinople (Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries C.E.)," *Medieval Encounters* 15.1 (2009): 86–113.

28. Ernest Barker, *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957); Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (1957; repr. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997); Marc Bloch, *Les rois thaumaturges: Étude sur le caractère surnaturel attribué à la puissance royale particulièrement en France et en Angleterre* (1961; repr. Paris: Gallimard, 1983); and Gilbert Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre: Étude sur le "césaropapisme" byzantin* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), trans. as *Emperor and Priest: the Imperial Office in Byzantium*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

29. Thomas Mathews, *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 16–21.

30. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods*, 19. While I do not endorse Mathews' reading of Grabar, I support what I understand to be the spirit of his effort toward a more rigorous historiographic contextualization of earlier scholarship on Byzantine imperial imagery and ideologies.

31. For additional studies that argue nationalist and/or imperialist sentiments partly shaped the formulations of medieval and late antique history and art history in the early twentieth century, see Carl Landauer, "Ernst Kantorowicz and the Sacralization of the Past," *Central European History* 27.1 (1994): 1–25; Margaret Olin, "Alois Riegl: The Late Roman Empire in the Late Habsburg Empire," in *The Habsburg Legacy: National Identity in Historical Perspective*, ed. Ritchie Robertson and Edward Timms, pp. 107–20 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994); Olin, "Art History and Ideology: Alois Riegl and Josef Strzygowski," in *Cultural Visions: Essays in the History of Culture*, ed. Penny Schine Gold and Benjamin Sax, pp. 151–70 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000); Jaś Elsner, "The Birth of Late Antiquity: Riegl and Strzygowski in 1901," *Art History* 24.3 (2002): 358–79; and Matthew Rampley, "Art History and the Politics of Empire: Rethinking the Vienna School," *The Art Bulletin* 91.4 (2009): 446–62.

32. Regarding the constructed nature of national identities and their impact on the formation of knowledge, see the seminal study by Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on*

the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (1983; repr. London: Verso, 1991).

33. André Grabar, *L'Empereur dans l'art byzantin: recherches sur l'art officiel de l'empire d'Orient* (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1936).
34. André Grabar, "Le succès des arts orientaux à la cour byzantine sous les Macédoniens," *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 2 (1951): 265–90. For additional studies that address the imperial image and Byzantium's intercultural artistic relations, see André Grabar, "Les fresques des escaliers à Sainte-Sophia de Kiev et l'iconographie impériale byzantine," *Seminarium Kondakovianum* 7 (1935): 103–17; Grabar, "God and the 'Family of Princes' Presided over by the Byzantine Emperor," *Harvard Slavic Studies* 2 (1954): 117–23; Grabar, "Un relief du XIe siècle à Brauweiler et l'origine des motifs 'sassanide' dans l'art du moyen âge," *Mémorial d'un voyage d'études de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France en Rhenanie, juillet 1951*, ed. René Louis, pp. 227–34 (Paris: Palais du Louvre, 1953); Grabar, "La soie byzantine de l'évêque Günther à la cathédrale de Bamberg," *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* series 3, 7 (1956): 7–25; Grabar with Oleg Grabar, "L'Essor des arts inspirés par les cours princières à la fin du premier millénaire: Princes musulmans et princes chrétiens," in *Settimane di studi del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo*, XII, *L'Occidente e l'Islam nell alto medioevo*, 2 vols. (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo, 1965), vol. 2, 845–92; Grabar, "Le rayonnement," 679–707; and Grabar, "La décoration architecturale de l'église de la Vierge à Saint-Luc en Phocide et les débuts des influences islamiques sur l'art byzantin de Grèce," *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 115.1 (1971): 15–37. Many of these articles are reprinted in André Grabar's collected studies, *L'Art de la fin de l'antiquité et du moyen âge*, 3 vols. (Paris: Collège de France, 1968).
35. For the outlines of Grabar's personal and professional biography, see Henry Maguire, "André Grabar," *DOP* 45 (1991): xiii–xv; and Ernst Kitzinger et al., "Memoirs of Fellows and Corresponding Fellows of the Medieval Academy of America: André Grabar," *Speculum* 66.3 (1991): 723–5. Regarding the Russian scholars active in Byzantine studies during the time of Grabar's training, see the brief sketches by Alexandr A. Vasiliev, "Byzantine Studies in Russia, Past and Present," *The American Historical Review* 32.3 (1927): 539–45; and Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire, 324–1453* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 42–51.
36. The third part of his book, "L'Art imperial et l'art chrétien," addresses the intersection between Christian and imperial iconography and is not of immediate relevance to the present study.
37. Grabar, *L'Empereur*, v and 2–3.
38. For a sustained critique of the emperor "mystique" concept, see Mathews, *The Clash of Gods*.
39. Grabar, *L'Empereur*, vi–vii and 264.
40. The latter attitude had roots in cultural perspectives forged already in the Middle Ages, but was formulated more systematically during the European Enlightenment. For an excellent overview of Byzantium's position in modern historiography, see Dimiter Angelov, "Byzantinism: The Imaginary and Real Heritage of Byzantium in Southeastern Europe," in *New Approaches to Balkan Studies*, ed. Dimitri Kerides et al., pp. 3–22 (Dulles: Brassey's Inc., 2003). Also see Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, 3–42.
41. Ana Siljak localizes the emergence of concern over Russian cultural orientation in the 1840s to 1850s and finds the impetus for these anxieties in the increased exposure to European philosophy, particularly the work of George W. F. Hegel (d.1831). Although he privileged the advent of Christianity as the turning point of universal history, Hegel censured Byzantium as corrupted by Eastern depravity. Russia, however, received no such condemnation. Instead Hegel positioned it on the cusp of determination and raised the possibility that it could join the ranks of Christian European civilization, or sink into "Asian" despotism. Strident positions in favor of and opposed to a modern Russian affiliation with Byzantium (as well as varying notions of Byzantium's Eastern/despotic versus Western/enlightened status) circulated widely in mid- to late nineteenth-century Russian intellectual circles. Ana Siljak, "Between East and West: Hegel and the Origins of the Russian Dilemma," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62.2 (2001): 335–58.
42. For analysis of competing notions of Russian nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, including the "official

nationalism" of Russification promoted by the Romanov dynasty, see Vera Tolz, "Orientalism, Nationalism, and Ethnic Diversity in Late Imperial Russia," *The Historical Journal* 48.1 (2005): 127–50.

43. As Tolz explains, Kondakov and other intellectuals of his time were "instrumental in promoting the state-framed vision of the nation and making this vision shape the research agendas of many academics." "Orientalism, Nationalism, and Ethnic Diversity," 133. On Kondakov, see Leo Klejn, "Nikodim Pavlovich Kondakov, 1844–1925," *Encyclopedia of Archaeology: The Great Archaeologists*, ed. Tim Murray, 2 vols. (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1999), vol. 1, 165–74.
44. Tolz, "Orientalism, Nationalism, and Ethnic Diversity," 133–5. I. Tolstoi and N. Kondakov, *Russkie drevnosti v pamiatnikakh iskustva*, 6 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1889). The first three volumes appeared in translation as N. Kondakov, I. Tolstoi, and S. Reinach, *Antiquités de la Russie méridionale* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1891).
45. For a rereading of the Vienna School that similarly proposes that their seemingly "progressive cosmopolitanism" is better understood as a particular form of imperialist Eurocentrism and orientalism, see Rampley, "Art History and the Politics of Empire," 446–62.
46. Tolz notes that the ultimate hegemony of Russian identity in multi-ethnic nationalist formulations is most clearly apparent in attitudes toward the Russian colony of Turkestan, which it was argued should be fused with "the dominant Russian nationality," even against the will of its people. "Orientalism, Nationalism, and Ethnic Diversity," 136.
47. Another possible impetus for Grabar's interest in the role of foreign, especially Sasanian and Islamic, artistic elements in Byzantine art may have been the work of the celebrated Byzantine historian Alexandr A. Vasiliev (1867–1953), who was also active in St. Petersburg during Grabar's time there. Vasiliev taught at the Pedagogic Institute of St. Petersburg from 1912 to 1922 and at the University of St. Petersburg from 1917 to 1925. His ground-breaking study, *Bizantia u Arabi* (*Byzantium and the Arabs*), published in 1900–2, may have encouraged Grabar's interest in Byzantium's artistic relations with the "orient." *Bizantia u Arabi* appeared in translated and expanded form as *Byzance et les Arabes*, trans. and rev. Marius Canard, Henri Grégoire, and Ernst Honigmann, 3 vols. (Brussels: Institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales, 1935–68).
48. Josef Strzygowski, *Orient oder Rom* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche, 1901).
49. Regarding Strzygowski and his impact on the study of medieval art, see Elsner, "The Birth of Late Antiquity," 361, 371–4, with earlier bibliography; and Christina Maranci, *Medieval Armenian Architecture: Constructions of Race and Nation* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001).
50. Grabar, *L'Empereur*, 264.
51. Grabar's response to Strzygowski is important because it offers a contrasting perspective to arguments that position Grabar as an inheritor and perpetuator of Strzygowski's theories. For example, see Elsner, "The Birth of Late Antiquity," 374. Grabar's promotion of Byzantium as a scion of Western, Roman civilization is more in keeping with the attitude of prominent Vienna School scholars including Alois Riegl and Franz Wickhoff. See Rampley, "Art History and the Politics of Empire," 456–7.
52. Grabar, *L'Empereur*, v–vi. While Grabar does not deny the presence of "oriental" – especially Persian (Sasanian) – features, he views them as part of the Roman imperial inheritance rather than active Byzantine adoptions. He states that while Byzantium inherited "Asiatic" influences from the Roman imperial tradition, they were "toujour arrangés d'une certain manière qui est romaine et qui exclut une influence directe de l'art oriental contemporain sur l'art official de Byzance.... Encore les artistes des basileis byzantins ne traitèrent-ils, là meme, aucun theme 'impérial' que les iconographes des empereurs de Rome n'aient déjà emprunté à l'art monarchique oriental." Grabar, *L'Empereur*, 264.
53. Ibid., 45–54, esp. 50–1; and 57–62, esp. 60–2.
54. Ibid., 50 and 138.
55. Grabar was not alone in this approach. A particularly explicit example of the tendency to fragment stylistically and iconographically hybrid objects like the Troyes Casket is also found in O. M. Dalton's survey of Byzantine art and archaeology published in 1911. Dalton analyzes the lid and front and back panels of the Troyes Casket in "Chapter IV: Sculpture," but reproduces only the lid and front panel in close proximity to the accompanying text. The back panel is illustrated approximately 200 pages before, but has no immediate relevance to the surrounding text. It appears in "Chapter

I: Introductory General Considerations," under a section entitled "IV. Period of the Palaeologi." The end panels depicting the *feng huang* appear in "Chapter XIII: Ornament," almost 400 pages later, and are discussed in a single sentence, which merely notes that they might derive from a medieval Chinese model. Dalton's fragmentation of the box across almost 700 pages of text undermines the object's aesthetic and semantic unity, leaving little possibility for a coherent reading of its program. O. M. Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), 22, 231, figs. 11, 144, and 145; 708, fig. 451.

56. Grabar, *L'Empereur*, 60–1.
57. Ibid., 51, 61–2, and 169.
58. Ibid., 134. Grabar continues to explore the origins of Byzantine royal hunt imagery by tracing the iconographic tradition from ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, through the Parthian and Sasanian traditions, up to the end of antiquity and the high Middle Ages in the Near East. Ibid., 135–36. But he eventually casts doubt on a single "path of penetration" into Byzantine art from "the oriental tradition," positing that it was also transmitted to Byzantium via Hellenistic and Roman art. Ibid., 137–9. Ultimately, he resolves that there were multiple courses that led hunt imagery to join imperial iconography, with different works of art and different periods showing a greater likelihood of one path over another. Ibid., 143–4.
59. For instance, Grabar and Grabar, "L'Essor des arts inspirés par les cours princières," esp. 121–3, 135, and 140.
60. Of course Grabar's treatment of "perso-arabe" art was determined in part by the fledgling state of Sasanian and Islamic art history at the time. Much of my own study is possible only because of the significant work in these subfields, especially since the 1980s.
61. For example, "Mais le luxe des soies orientales, avec leur décor exotique, n'est pas moins recherché, le prix élevé et la rareté de ces tissus contribuant sûrement à leur succès…ces étoffes [byzantines], qui imitaient des tissus de luxe iraniens et arabes, tiraient un avantage de la grande réputation de confort raffiné, pratiqué dans les palais musulmans." Grabar and Grabar, "L'Essor des arts inspirés par les cours princières," 139. On a related point, Cutler observes that Grabar viewed "secular" art as exclusively decorative and denied it any role in "the glorification of the sovereign and his functions," a position that Cutler criticizes as reductive and unproductive. "Sacred and Profane," 316.
62. For studies that expand upon the notion of imperial imagery and ideology as dominated by the affirmation of Christian authority, see Jolivet-Levy, "L'Image du pouvoir dans l'art byzantin," 441–70; Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre*; Kazhdan, "Certain Trends of Imperial Propaganda in the Byzantine Empire," 13–28; Cutler, "Sacred and Profane"; and *Imperial Art as Christian Art, Christian Art as Imperial Art: Expression and Meaning in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Justinian* (Rome: Bardi Editore, 2001). For the continued marginalization of Sasanian-Islamicizing elements in imperial art to the realm of palace "leisure," see Barber, "Reading the Garden in Byzantium," 1–19; and Robin Cormack, "But Is It Art?" in *Byzantine Diplomacy*, ed. Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin, pp. 219–36 (Aldershot: Variorum, 1992).
63. For example, see Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
64. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993). My reading of Said and my application of his work to the medieval context was spurred by Dimitri Gutas's important study of intercultural intellectual revival as a facet of Abbasid imperial identity, in which he draws from Said's theories on the nature of empire. *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsid Society (2nd–4th/8th–10th centuries)* (London: Routledge, 1998), esp. vii and 187–8.
65. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 13.
66. For additional evidence of elite courtiers' interests in and promotion of unconventional ideas that diverge from the standard formulation of middle Byzantine imperial power and evince the sophisticated and broad interests of the courtly class, see Paul Magdalino, "In Search of the Byzantine Courtier: Leo Choirosphaktes and Constantine Manasses," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire, pp. 144–65 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997).

CHAPTER ONE. EMULATION: ISLAMIC IMPORTS IN THE ICONOCLAST ERA – POWER, PRESTIGE, AND THE IMPERIAL IMAGE

1. For a broad discussion of the imperial image in texts, iconography, and ceremonial during the Iconoclast era, see Matthew T. Herbst, "The Medieval Art of Spin: Constructing the Imperial Image of Control in Ninth-Century Byzantium" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1998). Herbst does not, however, specifically address the role of foreign elements in imperial images. For consideration of art and material culture in the period of Iconoclasm, the seminal work remains André Grabar, *L'Iconoclasme byzantine: Dossier archéologique*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Flammarion, 1984), now joined by the important annotated sourcebook Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, eds., *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca. 680–850)* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).
2. A noteworthy exception to this assumption is briefly voiced by André and Oleg Grabar, who cite artistic production under Theophilos and Michael III as an area in which "la continuité de leurs efforts est parfait." "L'Essor des arts inspirés par les cours princières," 135. They associate the fluorescence of artistic patronage under Theophilos with his military successes against the Arabs and cite the continued advantage maintained by the Byzantines to have similarly enriched artistic production under the Macedonian dynasty.
3. On this point, also see Hussein Keshani, "The 'Abbasid Palace of Theophilus: Byzantine Taste for the Arts of Islam," *Al-Masāq* 16.1 (2004): 75–91.
4. On the reign of Theophilos, see Warren Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival, 780–842* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), esp. "Chapter Five: The Ambitions of Theophilus, 829–842," 263–329; and Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, vol. 1: esp. "Chapitre 2: L'Empereur Théophile (829–842)," 89–190.
5. Grabar, *L'Empereur*, passim.
6. Regarding the importance of the cross in Christian devotion prior to and during Iconoclasm, see Kenneth Parry, *Depicting the Word: Byzantine Iconophile Thought of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 178–90; James Francis Aldridge, "The Cross and Its Cult in an Age of Iconoclasm" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1993); and Hans Belting, "Image and Sign, Icon and Cross," in *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, pp. 155–63 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). On Muslim and Jewish criticism of Byzantine Christians' reverence of the cross, see Kathleen Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 91–4. For a brief overview of trends in art production during the Iconoclast era, including images of the cross used in monumental and portable objects, see Robin Cormack, "The Arts during the Age of Iconoclasm," in *Iconoclasm*, ed. Anthony Bryer and Judith Herrin, pp. 35–44 (Birmingham: Centre for Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, 1977).
7. Leslie Brubaker, "To Legitimize an Emperor: Constantine and Visual Authority in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries," in *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th Centuries*, ed. Paul Magdalino, pp. 139–58 (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994); and J. Moorhead, "Iconoclasm, the Cross, and the Imperial Image," *Byzantion* 55.1 (1985): 163–79.
8. Herbst, "The Medieval Art of Spin," 78–83.
9. Today Byzantine silks are largely preserved in European church treasuries. They were presumably sent to the West as diplomatic gifts or, in the case of less valuable examples, possibly purchased on the open market. Regarding the use of Byzantine silks in diplomatic exchanges, see Muthesius, "Silken Diplomacy," in *Byzantine Diplomacy*, ed. Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin, pp. 237–48 (Aldershot: Variorum, 1992); Muthesius, "Silk, Power, and Diplomacy in Byzantium," in *Studies in Byzantine and Islamic Silk Weaving*, pp. 231–44 (London: The Pindar Press, 1995); David Jacoby, "Silk Economics and Cross-cultural Artistic Interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim World, and the Christian West," *DOP* 58 (1994): 197–240; and Warren Woodfin, "Presents Given and Presence Subverted: The Cunegunda Chormantel in Bamberg and the Ideology of Byzantine Textiles," *Gesta* 47.1 (2008): 33–50.
10. On the function of textiles at medieval courts and the important role of garments in expressing social status, see Lisa Golombek, "The Draped Universe of Islam," in *Content and Context of Visual Arts in Islam*, ed. Priscilla Soucek, pp. 25–49 (University Park: Pennsylvania

State University Press, 1988); Anthony Cutler, "Exchanges of Clothing in Byzantium and Islam: Asymmetrical Sources, Symmetrical Practices," in *Pré-actes: XXe Congrès international des études byzantines, Collège de France-Sorbonne, 19–25 août 2001*, 3 vols. (Paris: Collège de France, 2001), vol. 1, pp. 19–25; Stewart Gordon, ed., *Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Mary Margaret Fulghum, "Under Wraps: Byzantine Textiles as Major and Minor Arts," *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 9.1 (2001–2): 13–33; and Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 61–87.

11. See esp. Hallie Malcom, "Hunters, Heroes, Kings: The Frieze of Tomb II at Vergina" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2008); Judith Barringer, *The Hunt in Ancient Greece* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), esp. 10–69; Jacques Aymard, *Essai sur les chasses romaines, des origines à la fin du siècle des Antonins* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1951); and Philip Peirce, "The Arch of Constantine: Propaganda and Ideology in Late Roman Art," *Art History* 12.4 (1989): 387–418, esp. 410 and 413. On the hunt in Byzantine imperial art, see Grabar, *L'Empereur*, esp. 57–61; Evelyne Patlagean, "De la Chasse at du Soverain," *DOP* 46 (1992): 257–64; and Maguire, "Imperial Gardens and the Rhetoric of Renewal," 181–98.

12. For art of the ancient Near East, see Elnathan Weissert, "Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph in a Prism Fragment of Ashurbanipal (82–5–22,2)," in *Assyria 1995*, ed. S. Parpola and R. M. Whiting, pp. 339–58 (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997); and Mehmet-Ali Ataç, *The Mythology of Kingship in Neo-Assyrian Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). For Sasanian royal imagery, see esp. Prudence Oliver Harper, *The Royal Hunter: Art of the Sasanian Empire* (New York: The Asia Society, 1978); Harper, *In Search of a Cultural Identity: Monuments and Artifacts of the Sasanian Near East, 3rd to 7th Century A.D.* (New York: Biblioteca Persica, 2006), esp. 120–26; and Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*.

13. Scholars often note Byzantine "receptiveness" to Sasanian-Islamic art in the Iconoclast era, but rarely offer deeper considerations for the reasons behind Byzantine emulation of foreign models. For example, see Cormack, "The Arts during the Age of Iconoclasm," 43; Anna Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving: AD 400 to AD 1200* (Vienna: Fassbaender, 1997), 68–70; and Muthesius, "Silk and Ritual: Ninth Century Byzantium in 'Global Context,'" in *Studies in Silk in Byzantium*, pp. 130–42 (London: The Pindar Press, 2004). Important exceptions include Maria Georgopoulou, "Hunting for Orientals," in *Abstracts of Papers, Twenty-Fourth Annual Byzantine Studies Conference* (University of Kentucky: n.p., 1998), 58–9.

14. "Saracen-minded" is the nickname given the iconoclast emperor Leo III (r. 717–41) by his iconophile opponents. G. R. D. King suggests that such accusation was more general insult than serious theological condemnation. "Islam, Iconoclasm, and the Declaration of Doctrine," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 4.2 (1985): 267–77 at 268. But Corrigan perceives a complex network of theological perspectives informing the conflation of iconoclasts and Muslims. *Visual Polemics*, 78–103.

15. Some modern scholars show similar biases in their interpretation of the cultural inclinations of iconoclast rulers. John Beckwith, for example, disparages Theophilos by ascribing to him "Abbasid tastes." "Byzantine Tissues," *Actes du XIVe congrès international des études byzantines*, pp. 343–53 (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii socialiste Romania, 1974), 348–49.

16. Hugh Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate: A Political History* (London: Croom Helm, 1981); and Kennedy, *When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World: The Rise and Fall of Islam's Greatest Dynasty* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2005).

17. See Preface pp. xxi and xxin.29.

18. It must be acknowledged, however, that the dating of Byzantine silks is fraught with difficulty, and the current chronologies are open to debate. For discussion of the criteria used for dating Iconoclast-era silks, see Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 81–89.

19. Regarding Iconoclast-era silks, including those that show imperial imagery, see Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, 2, 58–79, and 146; Muthesius, "Silk and Ritual"; and Brubaker and Haldon, "Textiles," in *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 80–108. As noted by Brubaker and Haldon, a small number of figural silks showing sacred themes were produced during the Iconoclast era, despite the overall decline in religious imagery.

20. Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 93–8 and 101–2.

21. Regarding the transferability of textile designs to other media in medieval Islamic and

Byzantine art, see Golombek, "The Draped Universe of Islam," 34–6; and Fulghum, "Under Wraps," 21–2.

22. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 152–3; Stephen the Deacon, *La vie d'Étienne le Jeune par Étienne le Diacre*, ed. and trans. Marie-France Auzépy (Aldershot: Variorum, 1997), 121, par. 26, lines 15–21; 126–7, par. 29, lines 24–6 and 1–6; and 215 and 221–2. For discussion of the iconoclast activities of Constantine V and skepticism regarding the historicity of these events, see S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Constantine V* (Louvain: Corpussco, 1977), 111–22.
23. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 153; Stephen the Deacon, *La vie d'Étienne le Jeune*, 166, lines 11–13; and 264–5.
24. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 153; and Stephen the Deacon, *La vie d'Étienne le Jeune*, 166, line 13; and 265.
25. Stephen the Deacon, *La vie d'Étienne le Jeune*, 199n101.
26. The parallelism between an Old Testament Eastern despot and an iconoclast emperor is found in the Theodore Psalter (London, British Library, Add. 19.352, fol. 202r), dated 1066, in which Nebuchadnezzar is shown alongside his own full-length portrait, which depicts him as a Byzantine emperor in full regalia. Charles Barber, *Theodore Psalter* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2000).
27. The medieval town of al-Fustat, next to which Cairo developed, was located on the site of the Roman-fortified outpost of Babylon, which may account for the association of Cairo with the name. A late ninth- or early tenth-century pilgrimage account that mentions "the great Babylon of the Pharaoh" may refer to al-Fustat. Alexander Kazhdan, "Epiphanios Hagiopolites," in *ODB*, vol. 1, 714. The tenth-century *vita* of the ninth-century saint Theodore of Edessa and the tenth-century Oneirocriticon of Ahmet both refer to Baghdad as Babylon. Steven M. Oberhelman, "Achmet Ben Sirin," in *ODB*, vol. 1, 14; and Alexander Kazhdan, "Theodore of Edessa," in *ODB*, vol. 3, 2042–43.
28. For discussion of the conflation of Muslims and Iconoclasts in ninth-century iconophile writings, see Corrigan, *Visual Polemics*, 78–103.
29. On Constantine V and his confrontations with Arab armies, see C. Zuckerman, "The Reign of Constantine V in the Miracles of St. Theodore the Recruit (*BHG* 1764)," *Revue des études byzantines* 46 (1988): 191–210; and Anthony Santoro, *Byzantium and the Arabs during the Isaurian Period 717–802 A.D.* (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1978), 250–54, 260–71, and 275–84.
30. For discussion of the charioteer silks, see Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, 58–64 and 72–73; and Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 93–4 and 101–2. Regarding the role of the hippodrome in imperial imagery, see Grabar, *L'Empereur*, 62–74.
31. On this point, I differ from Muthesius, who sees Sasanian features in specific charioteer silks. *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, 72.
32. Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, 58–64, cat. no. M45, pl. 16B.
33. Regarding the importance of the charioteer in early Byzantine society and the motif of the triumphant charioteer in monumental and portable art, see Alan Cameron, *Porphyrius the Charioteer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973). Grabar raises the possibility that the charioteer represents Theophilos. *L'Empereur*, 63. Muthesius contests this association, asserting an eighth- to ninth-century date based on style. *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, 58. Brubaker and Haldon also question the affiliation of the textile with Theophilos, dating the object to ca. 800. *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 81–2 and 101–2. The image is better understood as a general depiction of imperial victory.
34. Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, cat. nos. M29, M30; pls. 22A and 22B; and Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 93–4, fig. 59, with additional bibliography.
35. The theme of the hippodrome is also found in several ninth-century silks depicting the statues of the Dioscuri, which are known to have decorated the *spina* (platform running along the middle of the hippodrome) in Constantinople. See Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, 73, cat. no. M36, pl. 22B; and Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 94–5.
36. Grabar, *L'Empereur*, 60–1. On the "hunter silks," see Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, 62, 68–71, and 102; and Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 95–8, figs. 61–2. For additional hunter silks, also see Marielle Martiniani-Reber, "Le thème du cavalier-chasseur d'après deux soieries byzantines conservées aux musées de Liège et de Lyon," *Byzantion* 55 (1985): 258–68.

37. Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, 215, M417b; Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 97–8; David King, "Early Textiles with Hunting Subjects in the Keir Collection," in *Documenta Textilia: Festschrift für Sigrid Müller-Christensen*, ed. M. Flury-Lemberg and Karen Stolleis, pp. 95–104 (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1981), fig. 4; and David Buckton, ed., *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1994), 125–6.
38. Treasury of St. Servatius, Maastricht, inv. no. 1. Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, cat. no. M326, pl. 21B (who incorrectly identifies the silk as depicting an Amazon); and Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 97.
39. Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, cat. no. M37, pl. 76B.
40. For hunters depicted in other media, see Ioannis Spatharakis, *The Illustrations of the Cynegetica in Venice: Codex Marcianus Graecus Z 139* (Leiden: Alexandros Press, 2004), figs. 142–51.
41. Anna Gonosová, "Exotic Tastes: The Lure of Sasanian Persia," in *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City*, ed. Christine Kondoleon, pp. 130–3 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). Regarding Roman-Parthian and Roman-Sasanian artistic interactions, see Alice Landskron, *Parther und Sasaniden: Das Bild der Orientalen in der romischën Kaiserzeit* (Vienna: Phoibos Verlag, 2005); Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*.
42. For a historical overview of these conflicts, see John F. Haldon, *Warfare, State, and Society in the Byzantine World, 565–1204* (London: University College London Press, 1999), esp. 41–53.
43. *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History, AD 284–813*, trans. Cyril Mango and Roger Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 321, 451; cited in Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 80–1n4.
44. This is especially apparent in the Umayyad numismatic record in the decades immediately following the conquest of the Sasanian Empire. See Rika Gyselen, *Arab-Sasanian Copper Coinage* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000). Also see Richard Ettinghausen, *From Byzantium to Sasanian Iran and the Islamic World: Three Modes of Artistic Influence* (Leiden: Brill, 1972); Prudence Oliver Harper, *The Royal Hunter*, passim; Harper, *Silver Vessels of the Sasanian Period*, vol. 1: *Royal Imagery* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1981), 139–41; Abdullah Ghuchani, "Sasanian Motifs in Early Islamic Metalwork," in *The Art and Archaeology of Ancient Persia: New Light on the Parthian and Sasanian Empires*, ed. V. S. Curtis et al., pp. 188–91 (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1998); and Lionel Bier, "The Sasanian Palaces and Their Influence on Early Islam," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 57–66. For a recent argument in favor of viewing Abbasid palace art as a hybrid tradition that drew from both Roman-Byzantine and Sasanian-Umayyad sources, see Eva Hoffman, "Between East and West: The Wall Paintings of Samarra and the Construction of Abbasid Princely Culture," *Muqarnas* 25 (2008): 107–32.
45. An extant fifth-century Sasanian helmet shows the type that the Byzantine textiles represent. Harper, *The Royal Hunter*, 89, cat. no. 31; and S. V. Grancsay, "A Sasanian Chieftain's Helmet," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* n.s. 21.8 (1963): 253–62.

    Regarding this group of textiles, see Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, 69–71; and Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 95–6. Identification of the scene as drawing from the Sasanian epic of Bahram Gur (*Byzance*, 195) is not persuasive. Instead the textiles most likely depict a general hunting scene in which Sasanian elements have been intentionally incorporated.
46. Harper, *Silver Vessels of the Sasanian Period*, esp. 40–89. Also see A. D. H. Bivar, "Sasanian Iconography on Textiles and Seals," in *Central Asian Textiles and Their Contexts in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Regula Schorta, pp. 9–21 (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2006), esp. 10 and 13.
47. On the Parthians and their art, see Daniel Schlumberger, "Parthian Art," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 3: *The Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian Periods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1027–54; Brian Campbell, "War and Diplomacy: Rome and Parthia, 31 BC–AD 235," in *War and Society in the Roman World*, ed. John Rich and Graham Shipley (London: Routledge, 1993), 213–40. Regarding the "Parthian Shot" motif, see J. D. Lantham and W. F. Paterson, "Archery in the Lands of Eastern Islam," in *Islamic Arms and Armour*, ed. Robert Elgood, pp. 78–87 (London: Scolar Press, 1979), 84 and 87, figs. 89–92. The type possessed even earlier roots in Assyrian and Phoenician art of

the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. M. I. Rostovtzeff, "The Parthian Shot," *American Journal of Archaeology* 47 (1943): 174–87, 180. In ancient Greek art, "Parthian Shot" figures are clearly and consistently distinguished as barbarians through physiognomy and dress. Rostovtzeff, "The Parthian Shot," 177 and 181.

48. Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, 68–9, cat. no. M34, pl. 24B. Muthesius dates the textile to the eighth century (750s–760s), accepting the connection of this and similar pieces to a treasury donation from the Frankish king Pepin the Short (r. 751–68), which were received by him from Constantine V. Also see *Byzance*, 197, cat. no. 132; Anna Muthesius, "Silken Diplomacy," 166–8, pl. 64; and Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 96.

49. Regarding the Islamic origin of these surface patterns on animals in ninth- and tenth-century Byzantine art, see Alicia Walker, "Exotic Elements in Middle Byzantine Secular Art and Aesthetics, 843–1204 C.E." (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2004), ch. 1. For similar teardrop and dot elaborations in an eleventh- to twelfth-century enamel that combines Byzantine and Islamic features, see Stephen R. Zwirn, "A Silhouette Enamel at Dumbarton Oaks," *Deltion tes Christianikes Archaiologikes Hetaireias* 24 (2003): 393–402.

50. Oleg Grabar, *The Shape of the Holy: Early Islamic Jerusalem* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), figs. 28–49.

51. Harper, *Silver Vessels of the Sasanian Period*, 52–5, pl. 10.

52. Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 102; and Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, 62 and 69, cat. nos. M40, fig. 19A.

53. Regarding the concept of the hunt as a metaphor for military battle across ancient and medieval cultures, see nn 11 and 12, above.

54. See n12, above.

55. Harper, *Silver Vessels of the Sasanian Period*, 67–8, pl. 19.

56. Ibid., 139–41.

57. See n48, above. Regarding the function of silk in the expression of Byzantine identity and its use in Byzantine diplomacy, see n9, above and Muthesius, "Silk in Byzantium: Cultural Imperialism, Identity, and Value."

58. Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 81–9.

59. *The Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes (Liber pontificalis): The Ancient Biographies of Nine Popes from AD 715 to AD 817*, trans. Raymond Davis (1992; 2nd ed. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007); and Davis, Raymond, trans., *The Lives of the Ninth-Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis): The Ancient Biographies of Nine Popes from AD 817 to AD 891* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995). Also see discussion of the *Liber pontificalis* in Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, 65–79; and Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 82–9.

60. Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 89.

61. Three silks depict "men and horses" (presumably hunters), which are specified as "Alexandrian"; eight depict eagles, seven depict lions, the others show plants (including trees and apples), birds (including pheasants and ducks), and other animals (including lions, griffins, and unicorns). Davis, *The Lives of the Ninth-Century Popes*, 49–70, esp. 54, 57–9, 63, and 69–70; and Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 88.

62. Davis, *The Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes*, 170–227; and Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 83–4 and 104–7, table 1.

63. Davis, *The Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes*, 106–69; and Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 86–7.

64. Al-Ma'mun died during an expedition against the Byzantines in 833.

65. Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 133 and 149–50.

66. The Amorian dynasty takes its name from the city, which was the home of the emperor Michael II, Theophilos's father. Zapetra was the birthplace of al-Mu'tasim, so his conquest of the Amorian homeland rings of retribution.

67. Although misinformed about Umayyad naval capacities, Theophilos may have been knowledgeable about other aspects of Islamic culture. Eduardo Manzano Moreno suggests that Theophilos based his hopes for Umayyad intervention on knowledge of Arab prophecies that foretold the reconquest of territories from the Abbasids by a Muslim rival. Unfortunately for the Byzantines, Abd al-Rahman was unmoved by eschatological foreshadowings. On the Byzantine delegation to Cordoba in 839–40, see Moreno, "Byzantium and al-Andalus in

the Ninth Century," in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?* ed. Leslie Brubaker, pp. 215–28 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 220–6; and E. Lévi-Provençal, "Un échange d'ambassades entre Cordoue et Byzance au IXe siècle," *Byzantion* 12 (1937): 1–24.

68. Regarding the presence of Islamic, especially Abbasid, merchants in Constantinople from the late ninth to early tenth century, see Anderson, "Islamic Spaces and Diplomacy" in Constantinople," 86–113; and Stephen W. Reinert, "The Muslim Presence in Constantinople, 9th–15th Centuries: Some Preliminary Observations," in *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, ed. Hélène Ahrweiler and Angeliki E. Laiou, pp. 125–50 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1998), esp. 130–5.
69. *To Eparxikon Vivlion: The Book of the Eparch: Le livre du prefet*, intro. Ivan Dujčev (London: Variorum Reprints, 1970), 239–40.
70. Reinert posits that Muslim merchants became active in Constantinople in the late ninth or early tenth century and that prior to this period, Jewish merchants might have transported goods produced in Islamic lands to Byzantium. "The Muslim Presence in Constantinople," 134–5.
71. Hugh Kennedy, "Byzantine-Arab Diplomacy in the Near East from the Islamic Conquests to the Mid Eleventh Century," in *Byzantine Diplomacy*, ed. Johnathan Shepard and Simon Franklin, pp. 133–44 (Aldershot: Variorum, 1992), 139, and Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, vol. 1, 289–91.
72. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, esp. 28–45.
73. A. M. Harun, ed., *Rasa'il al-Gahiz*, 4 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanji, 1979), vol. 3, 303–51, at 314–15; cited and discussed in Nadia El Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 103–9, esp. 104; and Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, 83–94.
74. Harun, *Rasa'il al-Gahiz*, vol. 3, 314–15; Charles Pellat, "Al-Gahiz: Les nations civilisées et les croyances religieuses," *Journal Asiatique* 255 (1967): 65–105, esp. 71–2 and 86; El Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs*, 60 and 109–11; and Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, 85–8.
75. For the story of Leo, see *CSHB*, vol. 33, 185–92; and Magdalino, "The Road to Baghdad," 199–202.
76. On differences in the accounts of Theophanes *continuatus* and the Logothete chronicle, see Magdalino, "The Road to Baghdad," 200–2. For the Logothete chronicle, see *CSHB*, vol. 33, 638–40 and 804–6; and *CSHB*, vols. 44–6, 224–5.
77. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, 180.
78. Gutas suggests that Abbasid interest in Byzantine libraries and scholars may have led to Byzantium's own increased appreciation of these resources, stimulating a Byzantine "renaissance" of learning in the ninth to tenth centuries. *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, 175–86.
79. Magdalino, "The Road to Baghdad," 206.
80. F. Dvornik, *Les légendes de Constantin et de Méthode vues de Byzance* (Prague: Commissionnaire Orbis, 1933), 85–111 and 354–8; cited and discussed in Magdalino, "The Road to Baghdad," 202.
81. Magdalino, "The Road to Baghdad," 206.
82. Kennedy, "Byzantine-Arab Diplomacy in the Near East," 138. One Muslim prisoner released from Byzantine captivity was Muslim ibn Abi Muslim al-Jurami, a native of Zapetra, who was credited with possessing extensive knowledge about Byzantium and especially its frontier zones, which would have offered a military advantage to Muslim armies. Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival*, 270. Regarding prisoner exchanges between Byzantium and the Abbasids, see Kennedy, "Byzantine-Arab Diplomacy in the Near East," 137–9. For Islamic prisoners at the middle Byzantine court, see Reinert, "The Muslim Presence in Constantinople," 126–30.
83. On John the Grammarian's sojourns at the Abbasid court, the nature of these meetings, and controversy regarding their dates, see Magdalino, "The Road to Baghdad," 196–9; Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival*, 267–8 and 273; and J. Rosser, "John the Grammarian's Embassy to Baghdad and the Recall of Manuel," *Byzantinoslavica* 37 (1976): 168–71.
84. Theophanes *continuatus*, *Chronographia*, 95–9.
85. The exchange is recounted in an eleventh-century Fatimid text, Ahmad ibn al-Rashid Ibn al Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts and Rarities*, trans. Ghada-al-Hijjawi al-Qaddumi (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 77, par. 31; 266n3.
86. Perhaps the emphasis on the presence of churches was an effort to avoid accusation that the foundation evinced a "Saracen-minded" inclination on the part of John or Theophilos.
87. The Bryas has been associated with archaeological remains outside of Istanbul. Semavi Eyice,

"Un palais byzantin construit d'après les plans des palais abbasides: Le palais de Bryas," *Bulletin* 23 (1959): 79–104, esp. 79 and 101–4; and Eyice, "Contributions à la histoire de l'art byzantin: Quatre édifices inédits ou mal connus," *Cahiers archéologiques* 10 (1959): 245–50, esp. 245–8, but this attribution has been cast in doubt by Alessandra Ricci, "The Road from Baghdad to Byzantium and the Case of the Bryas Palace in Istanbul," in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?* ed. Leslie Brubaker, pp. 131–49 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).

88. Theophanes *continuatus*, *Chronographia*, 98; C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 160. For additional authors who refer to this palace, see Mango, "Notes sur l'épigraphie et d'archéologie: Constantinople, Nicée," *Travaux et Mémoires* 12 (1994): 347–50. Also see discussion of this diplomatic visit in Magdalino, "The Road to Baghdad," 196–9.
89. Keshani, "The 'Abbasid Palace of Theophilus," 83–4.
90. On Abbasid palaces and their decoration, see H. Viollet, *Fouilles à Samara en Mésopotamie: Un palais musulman du IX siècle* (Paris: Impr. Nationale, 1911); Alastir Northedge, "An Interpretation of the Palace of the Caliph at Samarra (Dar al-Khalifa or Jawsaq al-Khaqani)," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 143–70; Chase F. Robinson, ed., *A Medieval Islamic City Reconsidered: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Samarra* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001); and Hoffman, "Between East and West."
91. On this point, see Magdalino, "The Road to Baghdad," 198–9.
92. For a comparative study of palaces as both conceptual constructions of and actual spaces for the exercising of power, see Irene J. Winter, "'Seat of Kingship'/'A Wonder to Behold': The Palace as Construct in the Ancient Near East," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 27–55.
93. Scholars debate whether Theophanes viewed this Islamicizing building as evidence of Theophilos's ability to match the greatness of Eastern potentates, or if it was cited as further evidence of the emperor's weakness as a "lover of adornment." Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 160. Charles Barber asks if the account may represent a rhetorical trope contributing to the negative portrayal of Theophilos. He suggests that the iconoclast emperor and his courtier John may have been represented as "Saracen-minded" heretics through their commission and construction of the Islamicizing Bryas palace. Barber cautions against accepting the Bryas palace as evidence of actual Abbasid influence on the art of the Byzantine court. "Rereading the Garden in Byzantium," 1–19, esp. 4–5. Yet Theophanes *continuatus* is overall quite favorable toward Theophilos, undermining an argument that views the Bryas palace as a construction aimed to defame the iconoclast emperor. Athanasios Markopoulos, "The Rehabilitation of the Emperor Theophilos," in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?* ed. Leslie Brubaker, pp. 37–49 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 39; and J. Signes Codoner, *El periodo del Segundo Iconoclasmo en Theophanes Continuatus* (Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, 1995), 359–619.
94. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 149–50.
95. Regarding debate surrounding the dates of Theophilos's two triumphs, see McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 146–50.
96. Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival*, 275.
97. Moreno, "Byzantium and al-Andalus," 220–1; E. Lévi-Provençal, "Un échange d'ambassades," 1–24; and El Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs*, 159–60.
98. Regarding Islamic prohibitions against performing prostration outside of ritual prayer, see Roberto Tottoli, "Muslim Traditions against Secular Prostration and Inter-Religious Polemic," *Medieval Encounters* 5.1 (1999): 99–111. Regarding the practice of *proskynesis* in Byzantine culture and its depiction in art, see Spatharakis, "The Proskynesis in Byzantine Art," 190–205.
99. Lévi-Provençal, "Un échange d'ambassades," 11; and El Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs*, 159–60.
100. Regarding the testament of such prisoners after their return to Abbasid territories, see discussion of the late ninth-century high-ranking Abbasid prisoner Harun ibn Yahya, who recorded the magnificence of Byzantine ceremonial witnessed during his residency in Constantinople around 900. A. A. Vasiliev, "Harun Ibn Yahya and His Description of Constantinople," *Seminarium Kondakovianum* 5 (1932): 149–63; M. Izzedin, "Un prisonnier Arabe à Byzance au IX siècle," *Revue des études Islamiques* 1 (1947): 49–50; and El Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs*, 155–7.
101. Keshani, "The 'Abbasid Palace of Theophilus," 78 and 84–6.
102. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 149–50.

CHAPTER TWO. APPROPRIATION: STYLISTIC JUXTAPOSITION AND THE EXPRESSION OF POWER

1. This is apparent already in the reigns of Michael III (r.842–67) and Basil I (r.867–86) who are celebrated as champions of Orthodoxy and patrons of figural art. See Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 184–206; and Photius, *The Homilies of Photius Patriarch of Constantinople*, ed. Cyril Mango (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), esp. 282–96, 302–4, and 306–15.
2. See esp. Reinert, "The Muslim Presence in Constantinople, 9th–15th Centuries," 125–50; Simeonova, "Foreigners in Tenth–Century Byzantium," 229–44; and Anderson, "Islamic Spaces and Diplomacy in Constantinople," 86–113.
3. *To Eparxikon Vivlion*, 29–30 and 239–40.
4. On the topic of the Macedonian concern for precedent in earlier imperial traditions, see Paul Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantine: Notes et remarques sur enseignement et culture à Byzance des origines au Xe siècle* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1971), trans. as *Byzantine Humanism: The First Phase: Notes and Remarks on Education and Culture in Byzantium from Its Origins to the 10th Century*, trans. Helen Lindsay and Ann Moffatt (Canberra: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1986); and A. Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).
5. On this point, see Antony Eastmond, "Between Icon and Idol: The Uncertainty of Imperial Images," in *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium*, ed. Antony Eastmond and Liz James, pp. 73–86 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).
6. Moorhead, "Iconoclasm, the Cross, and the Imperial Image," 163–79.
7. *DOC*, vol.2, pt. 2, 569–73, plt. XXXVII. Depictions of Christ on coins produced during Justinian II's reign may represent the famous image hung over the Chalke Gate. They were limited to gold coinage; the few examples in silver were struck with *solidus* dies. See *DOC*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 160–1 and 454n4.
8. *DOC*, vol. 3, pt. 1, plts. I–XXVII.
9. *DOC*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 452–60, plt. XXVIII. Regarding the morphology of Christ's numismatic portrait in the period following Iconoclasm, see ibid., 146–69, table 16.
10. As noted in the Introduction, the program is no longer preserved, but was documented through the recording of the epigram that accompanied the images. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 184.
11. Markopoulos, "The Rehabilitation of the Emperor Theophilos," 37–49 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998); C. Diehl, "La légende de l'empereur Théophile," *Seminarium Kondakovianum* 4 (1931): 33–7; J. Rosser, "Theophilos (828–842): Popular Sovereign, Hated Persecutor," *Byzantiaka* 3 (1983): 37–56; and S. H. Griffith, "Eutychius of Alexandria on the Emperor Theophilus and Iconoclasm in Byzantium: A Tenth Century Moment in Christian Apologetics in Arabic," *Byzantion* 52 (1982): 154–90.
12. Markopoulos, "The Rehabilitation of the Emperor Theophilos," 41–46.
13. Regarding the history of Basil I's rule and the ideologies that he and his advisers created in order to justify and promote his claim to the throne, see Albert Vogt, *Basile Ier: Empereur de Byzance (867–886) et la civilization byzantine à la fin du IXe siècle* (1908; repr. New York: Burt Franklin, 1972); Leslie Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 147–200; and Shaun Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI (886–912): Politics and People* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 23–41.
14. This arrangement has called into question the paternity of Eudokia's children, especially Leo VI, who succeeded Basil I to the throne in 886. See Mango, "Eudocia Ingerina, the Normans, and the Macedonian Dynasty," *Zbornik Radova* 14–15 (1973): 17–27. The suggestion that Michael and Basil may have been lovers remains hypothetical. For discussion of this controversy, see Shaun Tougher, "Michael III and Basil the Macedonian: Just Good Friends?" in *Desire and Denial in Byzantium*, ed. Liz James, pp. 149–58 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999).
15. Athanasios Markopoulos, "An Anonymous Laudatory Poem in Honor of Basil I," *DOP* 46 (1992): 225–32; Markopoulos, "Constantine the Great in Macedonian Historiography: Models and Approaches," in *New Constantines*, ed. Paul Magdalino, pp. 159–70 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994), esp. 160–2, 169–70; and Markopoulos, "The Rehabilitation of the Emperor Theophilos," 48–9.
16. Evidence for the effort to disassociate Basil I from Michael III soon after the former's rise to power is found in the numismatic record. A *follis* dated 866–7 that was struck late in Michael III's reign depicts Michael on one side and Basil on the other. Examples of this issue

are, however, few in number, and those that do survive are exceptionally well preserved, suggesting they were taken out of circulation shortly after production, presumably in the early period of Basil's reign. On this point, see *DOC*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 456 and 459.

17. Theophanes *continuatus*, *Chronographia*. This attitude is also found in the works of other Byzantine historians of the tenth and eleventh centuries, including John Skylitzes (active second half of the eleventh century) and John Zonoras (d. ca. 1159). Markopoulos, "The Rehabilitation of the Emperor Theophilos," 37–49.
18. Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 29–30. In addition to his building program at the imperial palace, Theophilos was credited with the decoration and construction of churches, attributions that Brubaker and Haldon have questioned. Ibid., 26–7, with earlier bibliography.
19. Romily Jenkins, "The Classical Background of the *Scriptores post Theophanem*," *DOP* 8 (1954): 11–30.
20. This reputation persisted beyond the tenth and eleventh centuries. In the twelfth-century satirical dialogue *Timarion*, the protagonist travels to hell and is there judged by the emperor Theophilos, who presides at the court of the netherworld and is said to "shine.…most splendidly [in] honest judgment and all the other virtues." Barry Baldwin, trans., *Timarion* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), 64; Diehl, "La légende de l'empereur Théophile," 33–4; and Markopoulous, "The Rehabilitation of the Emperor Theophilos," 40. Indeed, it seems that care was taken in the *Timarion* to distance Theophilos from negative Islamic associations: While the pagan judges Aeacus and Minos "wore flowing robes and turbans on their heads like Arab chieftains…Theophilus, by contrast, wore nothing bright or shining. He was dressed in plain, simple black." Baldwin, *Timarion*, 64. Constantine Manasses, writing contemporaneously with the *Timarion*, spoke of Theophilos in favorable terms, emphasizing his just and impartial character. Diehl, "La légende de l'empereur Théophile," 35.
21. Markopoulos, "The Rehabilitation of the Emperor Theophilos," 49.
22. Persistence of Iconoclast visual language and imperial ideology is also found in the ninth-century manuscript of the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus, in which the cross is deployed as an emblem of triumph to legitimize the image of the iconophile emperor Basil I following the mode that was developed by the Iconoclasts. Leslie Brubaker, "To Legitimize an Emperor," 149.
23. Jolivet-Levy, "L'image du pouvoir dans l'art byzantin," 441–70; Kathleen Corrigan, "The Ivory Scepter of Leo VI A Statement of Post-iconoclastic Imperial Ideology," *The Art Bulletin* 60 (1978): 407–16; and Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium*, esp. 147–200.
24. The Troyes Casket is said to have been transported from Constantinople to Troyes along with other relics by Jean Langlois (John the Englishman), supposed chaplain of Garnier de Traînel, Bishop of Troyes, after the fall of Constantinople in 1204. Questions have been raised, however, regarding details surrounding this translation. See Giles Constable, "Troyes, Constantinople, and the Relics of St. Helen in the Thirteenth Century," in *Mélanges offerts à René Crozet*, ed. Pierre Gallais and Yves-Jean Riou, 2 vols. (Poitiers: Société des études médiévales, 1966), vol. 2, 1035–42.
25. The price of ivory in the early fourth century was low compared to other luxury goods, such as silver, which was forty times more expensive, and silk, which was twenty-four times more costly by unit weight. As Anthony Cutler notes, this may explain the use of choice pieces of ivory for relatively mundane objects, such as containers, in the early Byzantine period. By the same token, the relative dearth of practical objects made from large or thick pieces of ivory in the middle Byzantine period may indicate a decrease in availability and an increase in cost of the raw material during the tenth century and later. *The Craft of Ivory* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1985), 25–6. An increase in the value of ivory during the middle Byzantine period is also suggested by the frequent use of bone in combination with ivory, especially in the construction of the so-called rosette caskets. Ibid., 34.
26. In the middle Byzantine period, pieces of ivory over one centimeter thick were typically carved into sacred icons. Cutler, *The Craft of Ivory*, 26 and 36. Additional exceptions exist, however: A pair of ivory plaques decorated with floriated designs in the Louvre, Paris, and Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon, originally formed two sides of a box, which was also assembled without a wooden core, as evident from the thickness

and chamfered edges of the panels, providing another example of an apparently secular container using top-quality pieces of ivory. Marie Lee Coulson, "Floriated Plaque," in *GOB*, 236; and Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, "Deux panneaux de coffret à décor floral," in *Byzance*, 240, cat. no. 153.

27. Anthony Cutler, "On Byzantine Boxes," *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 42/43 (1984–5): 32–47 at 33–34; and Cutler, *The Craft of Ivory*, 36.
28. Carolyn Connor suggests that the ivory panels were "stained" (i.e., "soaked in a red dye") and may have remains of gilding. Based on microscopic analysis, she proposes that several other middle Byzantine imperial ivories – including that of Constantine VII (see Fig. 3) – may have also been originally highlighted or stained with color, including red. *The Color of Ivory: Polychromy on Byzantine Ivories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 17–18.
29. Meyer Reinhold, *History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity* (Brussels: Latomus, 1970), 62–70.
30. On the importance of color in Byzantine art and symbolism, see Connor, *The Color of Ivory*, 72–8; and Liz James, *Light and Colour in Byzantine Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). For Byzantine regulation of the production and sale of purple textiles, especially silks, in Constantinople during the early tenth century, see Edwin H. Freshfield, trans., *Roman Law in the Later Roman Empire: Byzantine Guilds, Professional and Commercial; Ordinances of Leo VI, c. 895, from The Book of the Eparch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), 25–6. For a technical discussion of Byzantine dyes with extensive bibliography on royal purple dyes in the ancient world, see Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, 27–33.
31. Michael McCormick, "Porphyrogennetos," in *ODB*, vol. 3, 1701.
32. Henry Maguire, "Casket with Emperors and Hunters," in *GOB*, 204–6, cat. no. 141.
33. N. Thierry, "Le Baptiste sur le solidus d'Alexandre (912–913)," *Revue numismatique* 34 (1992): 237–41; and *DOC*, vol. 3, pt. 2, 523, plt. XXXV, figs. 2.1–2.
34. *DOC*, vol. 3, pt. 2, 534, pl. XXXVI, figs. 5.1–5.2 and 6.1–6.2; and Jolivet-Levy, "L'image du pouvoir," 448–9. Romanos I Lekapenos ruled as regent for Constantine VII, the grandson of Basil I, and actively suppressed Constantine's imperial rights. Romanos was later unseated by his own sons, whom he had raised to the position of co-emperors. In the midst of the instability following this coup, Constantine VII assumed the throne in 945.
35. See esp. Grabar, *L'Empereur*, 51.
36. For example, Grabar, "Le rayonnement," 696, pl. XXII, fig. 3. Etele Kiss characterizes the incorporation of Persian and Chinese elements as evidence of tenth-century Macedonian "eclecticism," but does not engage further with the implications of this openness to foreign traditions vis-à-vis the imperial image. "Byzantine Silversmiths' Work around AD 1000 between China and the Ottonians: The Beszterec Holy Water Vessel," *JÖB* 49 (1999): 301–14, esp. 311–13.
37. Grabar, *L'Empereur*, 51 and 60. Paul Stephenson also discusses the imperial aspects of the box without acknowledging the end panels. "Images of the Bulgar-Slayer: Three Art Historical Notes," *BMGS* 25 (2001): 44–68, esp. 52–3.
38. Géza De Francovich discusses the Near and Far Eastern sources of the iconography and the royal ideologies that informed them, but does not place the box firmly within the context of middle Byzantine art, culture, and history. "Il concetto della regalità nell'arte sasanide e l'interpretazione di due opere d'arte bizantine del periodo della dinastia macedone: La cassetta eburnea di Troyes e la corona di Costantino IX Monomaco di Budapest," *Arte lombarda* 9 (1964): 1–48. David Talbot Rice proposes that the box draws from multiple models in Roman-Byzantine, Sasanian, and Chinese traditions and offers preliminary suggestions regarding the avenues of transmission for medieval Chinese motifs to Byzantium, but he does not address the meaning of the foreign motifs or the possibility of their conveying a message consistent with the program of the box as a whole. "Eastern and Western Elements," 347–53. Henry Maguire situates the casket within middle Byzantine rhetorical tradition of the royal hunt and triumph, but does not fully account for these themes in relation to the object's foreign features. He argues for continuity of meaning among the three long panels of the casket, but remains ambivalent about the place of the short panels within this semantic matrix. "Imperial Gardens and the Rhetoric of Renewal," 181–98; and Maguire, "Casket with Emperors and Hunters," in *GOB*, 206.

39. For examples, see Grabar, *L'Empereur*, 51.
40. Ultimately this sensibility bespeaks a broader characteristic of Roman-Byzantine and medieval art that might be called an "aesthetic of spoliation," both literally (for example, in architecture where elements, often of antique origin, were appropriated and recontextualized for aesthetic and ideological effect) and figuratively (in the way that objects produced *ex nuovo* appropriated motifs or styles and repositioned them in a new context, often creating novel meaning through the juxtaposition of elements from different origins). On this point, see Walker, "Cross-cultural Reception in the Absence of Texts"; and Avinoam Shalem, "Islamische Objekte in Kirchenschatzen der lateinischen Christenheit: Ästhetische Stufen des Umgangs mit dem Anderen und dem Hybriden," in *Das Bistum Bamberg in der Welt des Mittelalters*, ed. Christine and Klaus van Eickels, Bamberger interdisziplinäre Mittelalterstudien, Vorträge und Vorlesungen 1, pp. 163–75 (Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2007).
41. For example, "the imitation of exotic imports was a form of cultural appropriation also expressive of Byzantine power." Maguire, "Casket with Emperors and Hunters," 206.
42. In a minority of studies dating to the early twentieth century, the Troyes Casket is placed in the eighth century because its foreign elements and hunting scenes are associated with courtly art of the Iconoclast emperors. As noted in Chapter 1, this argument is likely influenced by iconophile writings of the tenth century that associate the art of the Iconoclast emperors with secular themes (particularly the hunt) and conflate their attitudes toward religious art with Islamic aniconism. Otto von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Berlin: E. Wasmuth, 1921), vol. 2, 5. André Grabar first proposed that the Troyes Casket may depict the Iconoclast emperor Constantine V (r. 741–5). "Les fresques des escaliers à Sainte-Sophia," 103–17, but was later persuaded by the eleventh-century date suggested by O. M. Dalton and Charles Diehl. Dalton, *East Christian Art: A Survey of the Monuments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), 218; Diehl, *Manuel d'art byzantin*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Paris: A. Pickard, 1925–6), vol. 2, 659; and Grabar, *L'Empereur*, 51 and 61.

    Earlier art historians also tend to claim a Sasanian source for the iconography of the lion hunt scene. De Francovich, "Il concetto della regalità," 6–19; Grabar, "Le rayonnement," 696; Rice, "Eastern and Western Elements," 349–50; and Kiss, "Byzantine Silversmiths' Work around AD 1000," 313. But comparison of the Troyes Casket more with Sasanian royal art does not support these claims. To the degree that box shows a resonance with Sasanian or Islamic works of art, this connection was probably mediated by Iconoclast-era objects, which offered the designer of the Troyes Casket more direct and meaningful models that contributed to a message of imperial legitimacy and continuity. The argument that the riders' headgear shows similarity to Sasanian royal crowns (Grabar, "Le rayonnement," 696; Despoina Evgenidou, ed., *Byzantium: An Oecumenical Empire* [Athens: Hellenic Ministry of Culture, 2002], 120; and Grabar, "La soie byzantine de l'évêque Günther," 223–43) is without support.
43. For a tenth- or eleventh-century date, see Maguire, "Casket with Emperors and Hunters," 204–6, cat. no. 141; for a tenth-century date, see Evgenidou, *Byzantium: An Oecumenical Empire*, 118–21, cat. no. 46; for an eleventh-century date, see *Byzance*, cat. no. 168, 258–9. Spatharakis dates the casket to the twelfth century based on the style of the riders' crowns. *The Illustrations of the Cynegetica in Venice:*, 235. His parallels are not persuasive, however, and closer comparisons are found in tenth-century works of art.
44. Even in instances where inscriptions are present, the repetition of royal names over many generations perpetuates uncertainty regarding which emperor is portrayed. The quintessential example of this problem is the ongoing debate surrounding the so-called Romanos and Eudokia ivory, which dates to either the tenth or eleventh century based on the inscription, which records the names of the eponymous pair. For the eleventh-century date, see Ioli Kalavrezou, "Eudokia Makrembolitisa and the Romanos Ivory," *DOP* 31 (1977): 305–25. For the tenth-century date, see Anthony Cutler, "The Date and Significance of the Romanos Ivory," in *Byzantine East, Latin West: Art Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, ed. C. Moss and K. Kiefer, pp. 605–14 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995). Maria Parani argues for a tenth-century date based on the analysis of imperial regalia. "The Romanos Ivory and

the New Tokali Kilise: Imperial Costume as a Tool for Dating Byzantine Art," *Cahiers archéologiques* 49 (2001): 15–28.

45. The progenitors of this style-based methodology are Adolph Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann, who, in their corpus of middle Byzantine ivories, associate the Troyes and Romanos ivories with the same "hand," and place the Troyes Casket in the so-called "Romanos" group, dated to the tenth century. Adolf Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.–XIII. Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols. (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1930), vol. 1, 63. This connection is based on the parallel between the facial features of the imperial figures. Cutler, in his reconsideration of Goldschmidt and Weitzmann's classification of the ivory corpus, acknowledges the similarity of style in the rendering of faces in the Romanos plaque and Troyes Casket, but notes differences as well, including the "wooden" character of the Troyes figures and the lack of foreign elements in any other ivories attributed to the "hand" represented by the Romanos Group. For this reason, Cutler removes the Troyes Casket from this stylistic cluster. *The Hand of the Master*, 207. He does not, however, dispute a possible tenth-century date for the casket.
46. De Francovich identifies inconsistency of style as a feature typical of tenth-century Byzantine ivory carving and dates the Troyes Casket based on this criterion. "Il concetto della regalità," 19. Kiss notes the eclecticism of the casket in which "late-Antique Persian and Chinese influences live together, very close to their respective prototypes," to be characteristic of the mid-tenth century. He argues that the more integrated use of foreign styles and iconography is characteristic of eleventh-century Byzantine art. "Byzantine Silversmiths' Work around AD 1000," 313.
47. Stephenson discusses this possibility, but ultimately supports interpretation of the Troyes Casket as a "general illustration, rather than the representation of a particular imperial entry." "Images of the Bulgar-Slayer," 53, an opinion also voiced by De Francovich, "Il concetto della regalità," 18.
48. The crown type is known as an "open" *stemma*. Elisabeth Piltz, "Middle Byzantine Court Costume," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire, pp. 39–51 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997); *DOC*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 127–9, table 13, fig. 1; and Maria Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th–15th Centuries)* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), appendixes 1 and 2. For a catalogue of middle Byzantine imperial "portraits," see Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, Appendices 1 and 2.
49. This group includes an ivory triptych, two silver cups, a manuscript headpiece, and a lead seal. To my knowledge, there are no instances of the *feng huang* in Byzantine art prior to the tenth century or after the eleventh century. On the group of Byzantine objects depicting the *feng huang* and the distinct strategies of appropriation at work in each instance, see Walker, "Patterns of Flight."
50. Anne McCabe, *A Byzantine Encyclopedia of Horse Medicine: The Sources, Compilations, and Transmission of the Hippiatrica* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 23–7; and Walker, "Patterns of Flight," 203–4.
51. Both are currently held in the cathedral treasury in Bamberg, Germany, and probably came to the West as diplomatic gifts to European political or ecclesiastical authorities or as goods acquired by such individuals during their travels to Constantinople.
52. Reinhold Baumstark, *Rom und Byzanz: Schatzkammerstücke aus bayerischen Sammlungen* (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 1998), 213–24, cat. no. 66.
53. It is one of several designs that Grierson associates with coins minted beginning in the mid-tenth century, although he notes that several different types can be found during the same period. *DOC*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 127–9, table 13, fig. 1.
54. The halo is found in Roman-Byzantine imperial images of triumph and enthronement; for example, a fourth-century silver-gilt plate depicting Constantius II (r. 337–61) in triumphal procession (see Fig. 23) and a fourth-century silver *missourium* depicting the emperor Theodosios I enthroned and surrounded by his heirs and guards. Sabine MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 43–4 and 214–20.
55. An extensive bibliography on this textile exists. Most studies assume the hanging depicts a specific emperor and triumphal celebration and attempt to identify them. See

Stephenson, "Images of the Bulgar-Slayer," 44–68, who interprets the rider as John I Tzimiskes (r. 969–76), who triumphed over the Bulgarians in 971; and Titos Pamastorakis, "The Bamberg Hanging Reconsidered," *Deltion tes Christianikes Archaiologikes Hetaireias* 24 (2003): 375–92, who identifies the mounted emperor as Nikephoros II Phokas, who conquered and annexed several regions in 964–5.

56. I assume that the intended viewer/user was male because the imagery on the box depicts activities – war and hunting – that in Byzantium were decidedly of the masculine domain.

57. A personification of Constantinople depicted in the right panel of a fifth-century ivory diptych wears similar headgear. Evgenidou, *Byzantium: An Oecumenical Empire*, 44–5, cat. no. 6.

58. For goddesses, see an ivory panel depicting Isis. W. F. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters* (Mainz am Rhein: Van Zabern, 1976), fig. 72. For victories, see the figure standing atop the globe in the consular diptych of Areobindus, in which miniature victories holding roundel portraits adorn the corners of the consular's throne. Evgenidou, *Byzantium: An Oecumenical Empire*, cat. no. 73, 168. Regarding civic personifications in Byzantine art, see Elizabeth Gittings, "Civic Life: Women as Embodiments of Civic Life," in *Byzantine Women and Their World*, ed. Ioli Kalavrezou, pp. 35–65 (Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museums, 2003).

59. Personifications of biblical cities depicted in an emphatically classicizing mid-tenth-century Byzantine illustrated rotulus, the Joshua Roll, wear similar mural crowns and flowing drapery. Kurt Weitzmann demonstrates their debt to classical models. *The Joshua Roll: A Work of the Macedonian Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), 64–72, figs. 65–74.

60. Grabar proposes that the mirror reflection of the imperial figures on the lid represents only one emperor, repeated for decorative effect. *L'Empereur*, 50. Similarly De Francovich associates the heraldic disposition of figures on the lid of the Troyes Casket with abstract compositions of ancient Near Eastern art in which "I singoli elementi sono rappresentati nella loro concreta realità fisica, ma si trovano inseriti in un impianto strutturale di carattere puramente decorativo ad astratto." "Il concetto della regalità," 4. Maguire has observed, however, that the figures are not identically rendered and argues that they were intended to represent separate individuals. "Casket with Emperors and Hunters," in *GOB*, 205. For a full summary of early interpretations of this scene, see De Francovich, "Il concetto della regalità," 1–2.

61. David Nicolle interprets the armor to be ceremonial and intentionally archaic, "designed to emphasize Byzantium's image of itself as a continuation of the Roman Empire rather than to provide effective personal protection." *Arms and Armour of the Crusading Era, 1050–1350*, 2 vols. (White Plains: Kraus International Publications, 1988), vol. 1, 40, figs. 96A–96D; and "Byzantine and Islamic Arms and Armour: Evidence for Mutual Influence," *Graeco-Arabica* 4 (1991): 299–326, esp. 300.

62. Grabar, *L'Empereur*, 50; and Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, vol. 1, 63.

63. De Francovich, "Il concetto della regalità," 3–4, fig. 3.

64. Ioli Kalavrezou, "Adventus: Representations in Art," in *ODB*, vol. 1, 25–6. On the *profectio*, see Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 246–51 and 254; and McCormick, "Profectio," in *ODB*, vol. 3, 1728.

65. On Byzantine *adventus*, see MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, 17–61; and Michael McCormick and Ioli Kalavrezou, "Adventus," in *ODB*, vol. 1, 25.

66. For example, see the aforementioned medallion of Constantius Chlorus (see Fig. 22) and the scenes of *adventus* on the Roman-Byzantine monumental arches of Galerius in Thessalonike and Constantine I in Rome. Kalavrezou, "Adventus: Representations in Art," 25–6.

67. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 57, 71, 85, and 213.

68. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 58; and McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 210–12.

69. The procession out of the city to meet the triumphal party was known as *occursus*, and the point of rendezvous was carefully orchestrated to reflect the status of the individuals being received. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 19, 211–13, and 211n102. The third-century rhetorician Menander noted that this first phase of *adventus* was marked by the *epibaterios*, an oration delivered outside the city walls, while the subsequent phase of *adventus*, during which the emperor proceeded into the city, was

marked by a second oration, the *prophonetikos*. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 21.

70. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 154–5; and Constantine VII, *Three Treatises on Imperial Expeditions*, ed. and trans. J. F. Haldon (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1990), 141–2.

71. Weitzmann posits that Byzantine artists simultaneously deployed various stylistic "modes," using, for example, a classical, naturalistic style for corporeal, historical figures and a flat, two-dimensional style to convey the more spiritual character of other individuals, such as saints or Christ. "The Classical Mode in the Period of the Macedonian Emperors: Continuity or Revival?" in *The "Past" in Medieval and Modern Greek Culture*, ed. Speros Vryonis, Jr., pp. 71–85 (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1978). In this sense, style served an expressive end, conveying meaning in the same way that an iconographic attribute might. I endorse Irene Winter's position that style is "a sign existing between the maker and the world, to be processed no less than subject matter," and that contrasting styles may be employed at an artist's discretion in order to convey meaning. Irene Winter, "The Affective Properties of Styles: An Inquiry into Analytical Process and the Inscription of Meaning in Art History," in *Picturing Science Producing Art*, ed. Caroline A. Jones and Peter Galison, pp. 55–77 (New York: Routledge, 1998).

72. Maguire interprets the static depiction in some middle Byzantine imperial images to indicate the paralleling of the emperor to divinities, particularly angels and Christ; style of representation serves as an indication of the figure's privileged, extrahuman status. "Style and Ideology in Byzantine Imperial Art," 221–9. Regarding similar interpretation of stasis in portraits of Roman and Roman-Byzantine rulers, see M. P. Charlesworth, "Imperial Deportment: Two Texts and Some Questions," *Journal of Roman Studies* 37 (1947): 34–8; and MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 44.

73. The senior emperor is usually depicted bearded, and scholars have questioned the status of the "senior" emperor of the Troyes Casket on these grounds. Perhaps the clean-shaven face of the emperor was a concession to Roman-Byzantine tradition; the early Byzantine emperors – including Constantine I and Justinian I – were consistently depicted clean shaven.

74. This turning point is evident in the *largitio* bowl of Constantius II (see Fig. 23). MacCormack compares the image on the dish to an icon because it differentiates the emperor from surrounding figures – who are rendered in smaller dimensions, are relegated to the visual periphery, or turn their gazes away from the viewer – and draws the emperor into the viewer's realm through his direct gaze. *Art and Ceremony*, 44.

75. The *largitio* dish of Constantius II similarly depicts the personification of Victory and a barbarian slave gazing and turning away from the picture plane (see Fig. 23); only the emperor confronts the viewer. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 44.

76. The identical rendering of the tetrarchs in the well-known porphyry statue at San Marco, Venice, demonstrates a Roman-Byzantine precedent for the parallel depiction of co-ruling emperors as a way to express their harmony of mind and common vision. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 32. The continuation of this convention in the middle Byzantine period is demonstrated by a manuscript portrait dated to 1128 of the emperor John II Komnenos and his heir Alexios, who are depicted in identical clothing and posture (see Fig. 3). The precedence of the senior emperor, John, is conveyed by the lions decorating the ends of his footstool and by his placement under Christ's right hand.

77. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 152.

78. G. Moravcsik, "Sagen und Legenden über Kaiser Basileios I," *DOP* 15 (1961): 59–126; Ioli Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, "The Portraits of Basil I in Paris gr. 510," *JÖB* 27 (1987): 19–24; Paul Magdalino, "Basil I, Leo VI, and the Feast of the Prophet Elijah," *JÖB* 38 (1988): 193–6; Brubaker, "To Legitimize an Emperor," 139–58; and Ioli Kalavrezou, "Helping Hands for the Empire: Imperial Ceremonies and the Cult of Relics at the Byzantine Court," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire, pp. 53–79 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997), 54n6, 61n36, and 74–79.

79. Constantine VII's regent, Romanos I Lekapenos, arranged for Constantine to marry his daughter, Helen, in 919. Although Romanos harbored imperial ambitions for himself and boldly consolidated real imperial authority under his own control, Constantine nonetheless eventually succeeded to the throne in 945 at the age of 40.

80. Grabar, *L'Empereur*, 26–30; Jolivet-Levy, "L'image du pouvoir," 444–5; and Brubaker, "To Legitimize an Emperor," 152–4.
81. On the importance of imperial succession as a means of establishing imperial stability in the Iconoclast period and its manifestation in coins, see Judith Herrin, "The Context of Iconoclast Reform," in *Iconoclasm*, ed. Anthony Bryer and Judith Herrin, pp. 15–20 (Birmingham: Centre for Byzantine Studies, 1977), 18–19.
82. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 147; and Constantine VII, *Three Treatises on Imperial Expeditions*, 53; 146–9, esp. l. 840; and 289.
83. McCormick, "Adventus," *ODB*, vol. 1, 25.
84. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 154–5; Constantine VII, *Three Treatises on Imperial Expeditions*, 141–2. Stephenson relates the image on the lid of the Troyes Casket to this event. "Images of the Bulgar-Slayer," 53.
85. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 177–8.
86. Constantine VII, *Three Treatises on Imperial Expeditions*, 97.
87. Regarding the evocation of Constantine I in Macedonian imperial propaganda, see Magdalino, *New Constantines*.
88. Constantine VII, *Three Treatises on Imperial Expeditions*, 146–51.
89. For example, the tenth-century emperor Constantine VII compared the triumph of Basil I, his grandfather, to that of Augustus Caesar. Jenkins, "The Classical Background of the *Scriptores Post Theophanem*," 23–6. Constantine VII's introduction to his *Book of Ceremonies* clearly states a desire to revive ancient ceremonial practices and reestablish the dignity of the Byzantine imperial office, a motivation also informing his military treatise. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 132 and 175; Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Le livre des cérémonies*, ed. A. Vogt, 2 vols. (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1935), vol. 1, 1–2.
90. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 132.
91. Aymard, *Essai sur les chasses romaines*, 317–18.
92. Roman animal hunts staged in circuses could become quite elaborate. One spectacle, known as a *silva*, involved transplanting trees into the arena to mimic a natural setting within which *venatores* (professional animal fighters) hunted wild beasts. Christine Kondoleon, "Signs of Privilege and Pleasure: Roman Domestic Mosaics," in *Roman Art in the Private Sphere*, ed. Elaine Gazda, pp. 105–16 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 107–8. A fifth-century Byzantine ivory diptych shows *venatores* combating lions and panthers; the setting is probably the hippodrome. Alice Bank, *Byzantine Art in the Collections of Soviet Museums* (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1985), pl. 30–31.
93. Nancy Ševčenko, "Wild Animals in the Byzantine Park," in *Byzantine Garden Culture*, ed. Antony Littlewood et al., pp. 69–86 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002), esp. 75–6.
94. Regarding lions at the Byzantine court and boar in the imperial game parks, see ibid., 71, 73, and 78–81.
95. Regarding scenes of animal spectacles in Roman domestic mosaics as records of their patrons' civic generosity and social status, see Kondoleon, "Signs of Privilege and Pleasure," 108 and 112.
96. For comparative examples of the rounded pommel (finial) and rounded quillons (guard between the blade and grip) of the sword, see Joseph K. Schwarzer, "Arms from an 11th Century Shipwreck," *Graeco-Arabica* 4 (1991): 327–50, 331–2, figs. 11–16.
97. Christine Kondoleon, ed., *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 66, fig. 3; and Irving Lavin, "The Hunting Mosaics of Antioch and Their Sources: A Study of Compositional Principles in the Development of Early Medieval Art," *DOP* 17 (1963): 179–263.
98. Regarding stirrup technology and its diffusion, see Hugh Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs: Military Society in the Early Islamic State* (London: Routledge, 2001), 171–3; A. D. H. Bivar, "Calvary Equipment and Tactics on the Euphrates Frontier," *DOP* 26 (1972): 271–92; and Bivar, "The Stirrup and Its Origins," *Oriental Art* 1.2 (1955): 61–5. John Haldon attributes the stirrup to the Avars, who transmitted it from the eastern steppes and China. He dates its introduction to the late sixth century. "Some Aspects of Early Byzantine Arms and Armour," in *A Companion to Medieval Arms and Armour*, ed. David Nicolle (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002), 66.
99. The dogs depicted chasing a rabbit in the hunting scene of the Great Palace mosaic, Constantinople, have the same elongated form and wear similar collars around their necks. Werner Jobst et al., *Istanbul The Great Palace Mosaic: The Story of Its Exploration, Preservation, and Exhibition 1983–1997* (Istanbul: Austrian Cultural Institute, 1997). Also see Aymard, *Essai sur les chasses romaines*, 242–93.

100. Spatharakis, *The Illustrations of the Cynegetica in Venice*, 75 and fig. 41; also see figs. 8, 9, 29, 40, and 108.
101. Coordinating the scene on the lid with literary descriptions of middle Byzantine imperial *adventus*, Maguire summarized the symbolic meaning of the hunt as a metaphor of the emperor's battle against both his own moral demons and foreign enemies of the state. He cites an encomium by the tenth-century rhetorician John Geometres comparing the boar hunt with victory in battle: "The oak is able to feed not only domestic but also wild boars, from which and against which comes all the strength of the hunt, the daring, the skill and the practice [directed] against our enemy." A. R. Littlewood, ed., *The Progymnasmata of Ioannes Geometres* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1972), 4–5; cited by Maguire, "Imperial Gardens," 197. Also see M. Restle, "Hofkunst und höfische Kunst Konstantinopels in der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit," in *Höfische Kultur in Südosteuropa. Bericht der Kolloquien der Südosteuropa-Kommission 1988 bis 1990*, ed. R. Lauer and H. G. Majer, pp. 25–41 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1994), 35–7.
102. Théodore Daphnopatès, *Correspondance*, ed. and trans. J. Darrouzès and L. G. Westerink (Paris: Éditions du centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1978), letter 14, 148–53; cited by Maguire, "Imperial Gardens and the Rhetoric of Renewal," 192–3n48.
103. A commentary by the courtier and writer Constantine Manasses (d. ca. 1187) explicitly links hunting and war. This text demonstrates the continuing correlation of battle and hunt in Byzantine thought. E. Kurz, "Ešče dva neizdannych proizvedenija Konstantina Manassi," *Vizantijskij vremennik* 12 (1906): 79, lines 1–15; cited by Alexander Kazhdan and Anne Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 244.
104. Regarding the reality and representation of the imperial hunt in the middle Byzantine period, see Patlagean, "De la chasse et du souverain," 257–63. Kazhdan and Epstein argue that military or hunting prowess did not feature prominently, if at all, in the tenth-century imperial ideal; during the Macedonian era, "the emperor was believed to be chosen by God; he obtained divine succor by means of his love and imitation of God." They therefore date the Troyes Casket to the eleventh century. *Change in Byzantine Culture*, 110–17, esp. 111. While they are correct to note the dearth of visual evidence for the royal hunt, ample textual evidence indicates that this theme was an integral aspect of imperial rhetoric in the tenth century.
105. Leo VI, *Oraison funèbre de Basile I par son fils Léon VI le Sage*, ed. and trans. A. Vogt and I. Hausherr (Rome: Pontificium institutum orientalium studiorum, 1932), 56; cited by Maguire, "Imperial Gardens and the Rhetoric of Renewal," 193.
106. Vogt and Hausherr, *Oraison funèbre*, 56; cited by Maguire, "Imperial Gardens and the Rhetoric of Renewal," 193n50.
107. Patlagean, "De la Chasse et du Souverain," 258. Basil I's combat took place during a hunting expedition. As reported by Liutprand of Cremona, Romanos's took place in the wild, during a military campaign. *The Complete Works of Liudprand of Cremona*, trans. Paolo Squatriti (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 2007), 120–1.
108. On the *toupha*, see Alexander Kazhdan, "Toupha," in *ODB*, vol. 3, 2100; *DOC*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 129–30, table 13, fig. J. The peacock feathers are discernible in the following imperial images depicting the *toupha*: the Bamberg tapestry (see Fig. 20), a drawing (dated 1430) of a column dedicated to Justinian I in the Augustaion in Constantinople, and coins of Constantine I and Theophilos. Charles Diehl, *Justinien et la civilisation byzantine au VIe siècle* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1901); and *DOC*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 406–26, plts. XXIV–XXVI.
109. The stiff appearance of the crest on the helmet of the Troyes rider may indicate construction from horse hair or metal rather than feathers. For comparable types, see M. C. Bishop and J. C. N. Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1993), figs. 2 and 4; 147 and 169.
110. See also the cavalrymen depicted on the fourth-century porphyry sarcophagus of the empress Helena (d. ca. 326) in the Vatican Museum. In the silver dish, the emperor Valentinian I is surrounded by soldiers wearing crested helmets; a single-crested helmet appears along with a shield and spear – symbols of the conquered enemy – in the exergue of the dish (see Fig. 29). The plumes of these helmets are rendered in the same manner as those on the

Troyes Casket, with radiating lines separating the crest into oblong sections. Bishop and Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment*, 31, fig. 7; and MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 204–5, pl. 52.

111. Bishop and Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment*, 94 and 169, fig. 1.

112. The possibility that this simple, crested helmet was also associated with triumph is indicated by scenes in the tenth-century Joshua Roll, in which Joshua appears wearing a similar helmet twice, toward the end of the story, after having defeated his opponents. *Josua-Rolle, Codex Vaticanus Pal. Graec. 431* (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1983–4). Regarding the adaptation of Roman-Byzantine triumphal scenes in the "pasticcio" of the Joshua Roll, see Weitzmann, *The Joshua Roll*, 100–14.

113. Ševčenko, "Wild Animals in the Byzantine Park," 70.

114. Although rare in middle Byzantine art, the pose is not unique to the Troyes Casket. A ca. twelfth-century Byzantine gilded silver bowl depicts a rider in this position. Evgenidou, *Byzantium: An Oecumenical Empire*, 47, cat. no. 7.

115. For example, see the mosaics of the Great Palace in Constantinople: David Talbot Rice, ed., *The Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1958), 142, pl. 42, B.

116. The backward-shooting archer appears in Roman battle scenes, but within this genre, the pose is limited to depictions of foreigners. For example, a third-century shield depicting an Amazonomachy, recovered during archaeological excavations at Dura Europos, depicts Amazon-archers shooting arrows as they turn. Bishop and Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment*, pl. XLV, fig. b. Like the riders on the Troyes Casket, the Amazons stretch their legs straight and rotate their foreground legs to point backwards. An association of the backward-shooting pose with Amazons was maintained in the Byzantine period: Eighth- to ninth-century textiles depict Amazons shooting animals while turning backward in the saddle. Their legs, however, are bent and point forward, like those of hunters in Roman-Byzantine mosaics. *Byzance*, 196, no. 131. Muthesius accepts a Byzantine origin for the Amazon hunter textile group and suggests an eighth- to ninth-century date based on technique and subject matter. *Byzantine Silk Weaving*, 71–2 and 172–3, cat. nos. M27; and 211, cat. nos. M323a–332a. She incorrectly identifies M326, a silk at Maastricht, as an Amazon; it is in fact a male hunter. Also see Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, 93, fig. 57.

117. Sasanian hunter images featuring the Parthian Shot pose typically depict the ruler with bent legs turned forward, as in Roman-Byzantine mosaics. Even in the rare exception where the foot points backward (see Fig. 10), the rider's leg is still bent. See Harper, *Silver Vessels of the Sasanian Period*, color pl. xiii; fig. 46; pls. 8, 9, 14, 18, 19, and 37.

118. The Chinese origin of the motif is further indicated by the palmettes on which the birds stand; as Kiss demonstrates, these plants also derive from medieval Chinese models. "Byzantine Silversmiths' Work," 311. Regarding the morphology of this vegetal motif, see Jessica Rawson, *The Ornament on Chinese Silver of the Tang Dynasty (AD 618–906)* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1982), 8–19; and Rawson, "The Lotus and the Dragon: Sources of Chinese Ornament," *Orientations* 15.11 (1984): 22–36.

119. For discussion of this motif in medieval Chinese art and consideration of the possible means of its transference to Byzantium, see Walker, "Patterns of Flight."

120. Post twelfth-century depictions of the *feng huang* commonly show the bird in flight. *The Animal in Chinese Art* (London: Arts Council, 1968), pl. 5 A–C; and Rawson, *Chinese Ornament: The Lotus and the Dragon* (London: British Museum Publications Ltd., 1984), 100, fig. 81. In contrast, Tang and some Liao representations showing the bird spreading one or both wings, but standing firmly grounded, as it appears on the Troyes Casket. The standing type is well represented by countless examples of textiles, metalwork, stone carving, ceramics, and jewelry. Paul Singer, *Early Chinese Gold and Silver* (New York: China House Gallery, 1971), no. 69; Rawson, *Chinese Ornament*, 73, fig. 53.

121. For a full discussion of medieval Chinese comparanda for the Troyes Casket birds and this possible path of the transference to Byzantium, see Walker, "Patterns of Flight."

122. Exceptions include De Francovich, who recognizes a possible coincidence of meaning between the phoenix and *feng huang*: Each bird

was associated by its respective culture with the ruler and with supernatural recognition of the ruler's virtue. "Il concetto della regalità," 17–18. However, Byzantine artists, patrons, and audiences do not seem to have been familiar with the Chinese meaning of the *feng huang*. For further discussion of the significance of the *feng huang* in medieval Chinese art and culture, see Walker, "Exotic Elements in Middle Byzantine Secular Art and Aesthetics," 287–9.

123. Maguire raises this possibility, noting how it would enhance the theme of imperial triumph and renewal articulated on the lid and long panels of the Troyes Casket. Maguire, "Imperial Gardens and the Rhetoric of Renewal," 194 and 196, fig. 6.

124. The *feng huang* is commonly referred to as a phoenix and is often assimilated with the Greco-Roman mythical bird of this name. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that the two birds were linked historically. A second fantastical bird, the *zhu niao* ("Red" or "Vermilion Bird"), is also prevalent in medieval Chinese tradition and is depicted following the same conventions as the *feng huang* such that the two are often graphically indistinguishable. Rawson, *Chinese Ornament*, 99. On the *zhu niao*, see Edward H. Schafer, *The Vermilion Bird: Tang Images of the South* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

125. The heronlike phoenix persisted until at least the ninth century, when it appeared in the apse mosaic in the church of Santa Prassede, representing the rebirth and eternal life of the martyr. Rotraut Wisskirchen, *Das Mosaikprogramm von S. Prassede in Rom: Ikonographie und Ikonologie* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1990) 29, 44, and Anhang 3. For additional discussion of the Christian significance of the phoenix in Byzantine art, see Walker, "Exotic Elements in Middle Byzantine Secular Art and Aesthetics," 279–80.

126. François Baratte and Kenneth Painter, *Catalogue des mosaïques romaines et paléochrétiennes du Musée du Louvre* (Paris: Éditions de la réunion des musées nationaux, 1978), 92–8, no. 44, figs. 86–93.

127. R. Van den Broek, *The Myth of the Phoenix According to Classical and Early Christian Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 105, 116–17, 180, and 434–6; and Henry Maguire, *Earth Ocean: The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987), 61–5. For further discussion of the imperial associations of the phoenix in Byzantine tradition, including the significance of the motif in dream interpretation, see Walker, "Exotic Elements in Middle Byzantine Secular Art and Aesthetics," 280–6.

128. Lu Chiu-kao and Han Wei, eds., *Gold and Silver of the Tang Dynasty* (in Chinese) (Peiking: Wên-wu ch'u-pan-shê, 1985), fig. 102.

129. The two dislocated ivory plaques depicting a floriated motif (discussed above, n26) may represent another Byzantine box of secular theme featuring the same motifs on opposite end panels. This can only be conjectured, however, because the box is no longer intact, and it is uncertain what motifs decorated the other panels or how the container was originally composed.

130. Regarding Leo's interest in military matters despite the fact that he never led the army on campaign, see Shaun Tougher, "The Imperial Thought-World of Leo VI, the Non-campaigning Emperor of the Ninth Century," in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?* ed. Leslie Brubaker, pp. 51–60 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998); and P. Karlin-Hayter, "When Military Affairs Were in Leo's Hands: A Note on Byzantine Foreign Policy (886–912)," *Traditio* 23 (1967): 15–40.

131. On the *Taktika* and Leo's attitudes toward his Arab adversaries, see Gilbert Dagron, "Byzance et le modèle islamique au Xe siècle: À propos des *constitutions tactiques* de l'empereur Léon VI," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 127.2 (1983): 219–43; T. G. Kolias, "The *Taktika* of Leo VI the Wise and the Arabs," *Graeco-Arabica* 3 (1984): 129–35; Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World*, 382; Liliana Simeonova, "In the Depths of Tenth-Century Byzantine Ceremonial: The Treatment of Arab Prisoners of War at Imperial Banquets," *BMGS* 22 (1998): 75–104 at 77–79.

132. The preservation of the protocol list of Leo's reign by his son Constantine VII in the *Book of Ceremonies*, an important court manual assembled in the mid-tenth century, suggests that the status of Muslim prisoners at the court – or at least the attitude toward foreigners that Leo's practices evince – was maintained into the mid-tenth century. Simeonova, "In the Depths of Tenth-Century Byzantine Ceremonial," 78–9.

133. Ibid., 91–104.
134. Ibid., 80.
135. Alexander Kazhdan, "The Aristocracy and the Imperial Ideal," in *The Byzantine aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries*, ed. Michael Angold, *BAR International Series*, 221 (Oxford: B.A.R, 1984): 43–57, esp. 43–9; and Jonathan Shepard, "Emperors and Expansionism: From Rome to Middle Byzantium," in *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, ed. David Abulafia and Nora Berend, pp. 55–82 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).
136. Shepard, "Emperors and Expansionism," 69–73.
137. Regarding the concept of the Byzantine *oikoumene*, see Alexander Kazhdan, "Oikoumene," in *ODB*, vol. 3, 1518.
138. Such an interpretation resonates with McCormick's notion that imperial ceremonial, in particular triumphal ceremonial, represents "not so much eternal truths as ephemeral perceptions of imperial power and policy. In other words, the key word to characterize Byzantine ceremonial in its specific details is just the opposite of what the conventional wisdom might suggest. Rather than rigidity, it displays remarkable flexibility and adaptiveness." Michael McCormick, "Analyzing Imperial Ceremonies," *JÖB* 35 (1985): 1–20 at 20.
139. For example, Evgenidou, *Byzantium: An Oecumenical Empire*, 120.
140. I thank Anthony Cutler for bringing this point to my attention.
141. Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts and Rarities*, 100–1 (paragraph 73).
142. Cutler, "Les échanges de dons," 53–4. The high esteem in which the Byzantines held the Spanish Umayyads is indicated by the fact that the letter from the Constantine to Abd al-Rahman was officiated with a seal of the same weight as that prescribed for the seals attached to letters for the Abbasid caliph and four times the weight of seals on letters to the pope in Rome. Ibid, 52–3.
143. Constantine VII, *Three Treatises on Imperial Expeditions*, 108–9.
144. Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Faqih al-Hamadhani, for example, reported that the color purple was particular to the Byzantine emperor. *Abrégé du livre des pays* (*Kitab al-Budldan*), trans. H. Massé (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1973), 141; cited by El Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs*, 158.
145. Cutler, "Les échanges de dons," 53–4. Also see the textiles sent by the Byzantine emperor Romanos I to Abbasid Caliph al-Radi bi-Allah (r. 934–40) that bear the image of the emperor. Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts and Rarities*, 101 (paragraph 73).
146. As Maguire notes, "imperial portraits were not only marks of the donor's suzerainty over the recipient and guarantees of the authenticity of any accompanying messages or documents, but also assurances of the emperor's military or political aid." "Magic and Money in the Early Middle Ages," *Speculum* 72 (1997): 1037-54 at 1039. Maguire's interpretation follows that of Grabar, *L'Empereur*, 7. A thirteenth-century text by the Byzantine orator Manouel Holobolos speaks of the continued value of the image of the Byzantine emperor as a guarantee of the emperor's protection. An embroidered portrait of Michael VIII Palaiologus (r. 1259–82) was given as a diplomatic gift to the city of Genoa, and the Genoese ambassador lauded the gift as "a firm means of defense against our adversaries, an averter of every plot, a strong bulwark for your city and ours." Manouel Holobolos, *Manuelis Holobuli Orationes*, ed. M. Treu, 2 vols. (Potsdam: P. Brandt, 1906–1907), vol. 1, 46; cited in Maguire, "Magic and Money," 1040. Also see Adele LaBarre Starensier, "An Art Historical Study of the Byzantine Silk Industry" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1982), 465–79.
147. E. C. Dodd, "On the Origins of Medieval *Dinanderie*: The Equestrian Statue in Islam," *The Art Bulletin* 51 (1969): 220–32, 225–9; and Renata Holod, "Luxury Arts of the Caliphal Period," in *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain*, ed. Jerrilynn D. Dodds, pp. 41–8 (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), 40–7.
148. Regarding the suitability of "international" iconographies for objects intended to travel across cultural borders, see Hoffman, "Pathways of Portability," 26; and Cormack, "But Is It Art?"
149. For example, see Barber, "Rereading the Garden in Byzantium," 4. Although as noted above, this perspective is not unfounded. The pejorative coupling of Islamic and Iconoclast sources is found in art and documents of the late ninth and tenth centuries. For a useful summary of the textual tradition and its relationship to ninth-century imagery, see Corrigan, *Visual Polemics*, 78–103.

CHAPTER THREE. PARITY: CRAFTING A BYZANTINE-ISLAMIC COMMUNITY OF KINGS

1. The text exists in one copy, which is held in the collections of the public library of Afyon (Afyonkarahisar), Turkey. The manuscript is thought to be a fifteenth-century compilation of extracts from a now-lost eleventh-century original. Aḥmad Ibn-ar-Rašīd Ibn-az-Zubair, *Kitāb ad-Daḫā'ir wa-'t-Tuḥaf*, ed. Muhammad Hamidullah (Kuwait: Wizārat al-Maṭbū'āt wa-'n-Našr fī 'l-Kuwait, 1959); also see Muhammad Hamidullah, "Nouveaux documents sur les rapports de l'Europe avec l'Orient musulman au moyen âge," *Arabica* 7.3 (1960): 281–300; and Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts*.
2. Hamidullah identifies the author of the text and proposes that he served as an administrator at the Fatimid court in Cairo. "Nouveaux documents," 281–4. The original manuscript is attributed to the third quarter of the eleventh century based on the date of its latest reference, 1071–2.
3. Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts*, paragraphs 5, 9, 31, 62, 73, 74, 82, 84, 85, 91, 97–9, 101, 105, 161–4, 263, and 340.
4. André Grabar recognizes the realm of historical, biblical, and mythological forerunners as a shared domain of royal types for Byzantine and Islamic rulers. Yet he does not pursue the potential ways in which these common models were used to articulate notions of parity in the diplomatic realm. Rather he sees them as parallel phenomena and does not explore their relevance to cross-cultural exchange. See Grabar and Grabar, "L'Essor des arts inspirés par les cours princières," esp. 122–3, 129–30, 136–7, 140, and 143. He also acknowledges in passing that Muslim rulers might participate in the Byzantine "family of princes," but does not elaborate on the implications of these connections or the way in which works of art contributed to the articulation of such relationships. Grabar, "God and the 'Family of Princes'" 116. For the Byzantine-Sasanian rhetoric of brotherhood in diplomatic exchanges, see Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, 154–66.
5. On this point, see Marius Canard, "Le cérémonial fatimite et le cérémonial byzantin," *Byzantion* 21 (1951): 355–420; Grabar and Grabar, "L'Essor des arts inspirés par les cours princières"; Hilal al-Sabi, *Rusum Dar ál-Khalifa (The Rules and Regulations of the 'Abbasid Court)*, trans. Elie A. Salem (Beirut: American University, 1977); Dominique Sourdel, "Questions de ceremonial abbaside," *Revue des Études Islamiques* 38 (1960): 121–48; Oleg Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 149–65. Grabar, "Notes sur les cérémonies Umayyades," in *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*, pp. 51–60 (Jerusalem: Institute of Asian and African Studies, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1977); Cutler, "The Parallel Universes of Arab and Byzantine Art," 635–48 (Paris: Presse de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1999); and El Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs*, 152–62.
6. Grabar, "The Shared Culture of Objects," 116.
7. This evidence is particularly common among ivory and precious-metal caskets fashioned and distributed at the Spanish Umayyad court. See Holod, "Luxury Arts of the Caliphal Period," 41–8, cat. nos. 2–5, 7, and 9.
8. For example, see Francisco Prado-Vilar, "Circular Visions of Fertility and Punishment: Caliphal Ivory Caskets from al-Andalus," *Muqarnas* 14 (1997): 19–41.
9. Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts*, figs. 1–16b. Also see Marlia Mundell Mango, "Hierarchies of Rank and Materials: Diplomatic Gifts Sent by Romanus I in 935 and 938," *Deltion tes Christianikes Archaiologikes Hetaireias* 24 (2003): 365–74.
10. Cutler, "Les échanges de dons," 51–66.
11. Cutler, "Gifts and Gift Exchange," 247–78. This approach is further expanded by Koray Durak, "Commerce and Networks of Exchange between the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic Near East from the Early Ninth Century to the Arrival of the Crusaders" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2008).
12. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1990); originally published as *Essai sur le don, forme et raison de l'echange dans les sociétés archaiques* (Paris: Alcan, 1925). See Anthony Cutler, "Out of the Mauss Trap: Byzantine Gifts and Gift Exchange in Light of Arab Sources," in *Twenty-Fifth Annual Byzantine Studies Conference Abstracts of Papers* (College Park: University of Maryland, 1999), 82–3; and Cutler, "Significant Gifts: Patterns of Exchange in Late Antique, Byzantine, and Early Islamic Diplomacy," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38.1 (2008): 79–101.

13. On this point, see Walker, "Exotic Elements in Middle Byzantine Secular Art and Aesthetics," ch. 2; and Avinoam Shalem, "Objects as Carriers of Real or Contrived Memories in a Cross-cultural Context," *Mitteilungen zur spätantiken Archäologie und byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte* 4 (2005): 101–20, esp. 109 and 115–16.
14. This interpretation expands on the notion of a "brotherhood" of medieval Christian kings for which Byzantium was the leader. Typically, however, this family of rulers is perceived as interrelated primarily through their shared Christian identity. See Grabar, "God and the 'Family of Princes'"; and George Ostrogorsky, "The Byzantine Emperor and the Hierarchical World Order," 1–14.
15. Robin Cormack, "But Is It Art?" 230.
16. See esp. Annette Weiner, "Inalienable Wealth," *American Ethnologist* 12.2 (1985): 210–27; Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); and Maurice Godelier, *L'Énigme du don* (Paris: Fayard, 1996); trans. as *The Enigma of the Gift*, trans. Nora Scott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
17. I concur with Patrick Geary's caveat – voiced also by Cutler – that the societies that provide the contexts from which most anthropological theories of the gift have developed are not entirely comparable to medieval situations. Patrick Geary, "Sacred Commodities: the Circulation of Medieval Relics," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Social Perspective*, ed. A. Appadurai, pp. 169–91 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 190. Ultimately, medievalists must negotiate their own set of criteria through which to understand the character of medieval gift exchange. For work in this direction, see Arnoud-Jan A. Bijsterveld, "The Medieval Gift as Agent of Social Bonding and Political Power," in *Medieval Transformations: Texts, Power, and Gifts in Context*, ed. Esther Cohen and Mayke De Jong, pp. 123–56 (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Cutler, "Out of the Mauss Trap"; Shalem, "Objects as Carriers of Real or Contrived Memories"; Cecily Hilsdale, "The Social Life of the Byzantine Gift: The Royal Crown of Hungary Re-invented," *Art History* 31 (2008): 603–31. Durak, "Commerce and Networks of Exchange"; Cutler, "Significant Gifts"; Woodfin, "Presents Given and Presence Subverted," 33–50; and Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 26–34.
18. Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. G.Y. Moravcsik, trans. R. J. H. Jenkins (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1967).
19. The terms that have been translated using the English word "gift" vary considerably throughout the text; the nuances of definitions are noted below.
20. Constantine VII, *De Administrando Imperio*, 44–5 (proem., line 18).
21. It should be noted, however, that the restrictions articulated by Constantine were not legal codes, but customary rules. On several occasions Byzantine princesses were offered in marriage to foreign rulers. Between the eighth and twelfth centuries, at least sixteen marriage alliances were negotiated (although not all realized) with medieval courts of the West. Muthesius, "Silk, Power, and Diplomacy in Byzantium," 236; and T. C. Lounghis, *Les ambassades byzantines en occident depuis la fondation des états barbars jusqu'aux Croisades (407–1096)* (Athens: T. C. Lounghis, 1980). However, in many of these cases – for example, Maria Lekapena, who was married to the Bulgarian king Peter in 927, and Theophano, daughter of Romanos I, who was married to the German king Otto II in 972 – the women had not technically been "born in the purple." Jonathan Shepard, "A Marriage Too Far? Maria Lekapena and Peter of Bulgaria," in *The Empress Theophano: Byzantium and the West at the Turn of the First Millennium*, ed. Adelbert Davids, pp. 121–49 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Nonetheless, the practice highlights the degree to which the ideals of government as outlined in *De Administrando Imperio* and the reality of Byzantine practice were not always commensurate.
22. Constantine VII, *De Administrando Imperio*, 54–5, line 9 (ch. 7). The word, "ξενάλια," is related to the term for foreigners and the notion of hospitality to strangers. In the next line, Constantine states that when Byzantine envoys go to the Pechenegs' country, the Pechenegs "first ask for the emperor's gifts [δῶρα], and then again, when these have glutted the menfolk, they ask for the presents for their wives and parents." Ibid., line 13 (ch. 7). This term, δῶρα, is a more generic word for "gifts."
23. Constantine VII, *De Administrando Imperio*, 66–7, lines 14–21 (ch. 13).

24. I refer here to Weiner's theory of "inalienable possessions," introduced in her revision of Malinowski's and Mauss's theories of reciprocity in gift exchange. Weiner argues that "the kinds of possessions that people try to keep out of circulation are far more theoretically meaningful than assuming that exchange simply involves the reciprocity of gift giving." *Inalienable Possessions*, 10. Weiner's category of "inalienable possessions" resonates well with the way in which certain objects and materials were guarded by the Byzantines: "There are other possessions that are imbued with the intrinsic and ineffable identities of their owners which are not easy to give away. Ideally, these inalienable possessions are kept by their owners from one generation to the next within the closed context of family, descent group, or dynasty. The loss of such an inalienable possession diminishes the self and by extension, the group to which a person belongs." In other words, the Byzantines kept out of circulation those objects that embodied their authority and advantage, either real, as in the case of Greek fire, or symbolic, as in the case of imperial regalia.
25. Constantine VII, *De Administrando Imperio*, 66–75 (ch. 13). One is here tempted to expand further a parallel with Weiner's theory in order to highlight the role that divine authority plays in Byzantine regulation of precious commodities. Weiner's term "cosmological authentication" accounts for "how material resources and social practices link individuals and groups with an authority that transcends present social and political action. Because this authority is lodged in past actions or representations and in sacred or religious domains, to those who draw on it, it is a powerful legitimating force." *Inalienable Possessions*, 4. However, Constantine VII presents his "excuses" for refusing to give certain objects to foreigners with jaded awareness that he is manipulating unsophisticated and ignorant barbarians. My impression is that Weiner perceives the cultural groups she studies to hold a more genuine belief in the reality of divine authority and retribution.
26. Constantine VII, *De Administrando Imperio*, 48–9, lines 19 and 23 (ch. 1). The terms used in this passage for gifts are as follows: ξενίων, which, like ξενάλια, is associated with strangers or guests and relates to notions of hospitality; and φιλοτιμιῶν, which translates literally as "love of honors," but in the plural means "gifts," acknowledging the way in which gifts bestow honor on the recipient.
27. Ibid., 50–3, lines 10–13 (ch. 4).
28. Ibid., 132–3, lines 181–2 (ch. 29).
29. Ibid., 48–9, lines 18–21 (ch. 1). Also see Mango, "Hierarchies of Rank and Materials," esp. 365–6 and 372–3.
30. Constantinc VII, *De ceremoniis,* vol. 8, 686, l. 6–692, 2 (bk. 2, chs. 47–8); cited by Cutler, "Les échanges de dons," 52–3.
31. The suitability of gifts resonates with C. A. Gregory's distinction between commodities, which carry prices, and gifts, which carry rank. "Kula Gift Exchange and Capitalist Commodity Exchange: A Comparison," in *The Kula: New Perspectives on Massim Exchange*, pp. 103–17 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 109. According to this definition, the "value" of a gift is not wholly intrinsic to the object but is generated in part by the process of giving and the relative status of recipients.
32. Constantine VII, *De Administrando Imperio*, 106–7, lines 56–62 (ch. 25).
33. Ibid., 108–9, lines 81–5 (ch. 25).
34. Michael Psellus, *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers: The Chronographia of Michael Psellus*, trans. E. R. A. Sewter (New York: Penguin Books, 1966), 253.
35. Ibid., 253.
36. Constantine VII, *De Administrando Imperio*, 76–7, lines 197–200 (ch. 13).
37. Grabar, "Le rayonnement," esp. 694 and 707.
38. Cormack, "But Is It Art?" 225, 229, and 331–3.
39. On this point, esp. see Hoffman, "Pathways of Portability," 20–3 and 29–30.
40. Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts*, 99–101 (par. 73). This exchange is described in Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, vol. 2, 278–9.
41. Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts*, 99 (par. 73).
42. A similar attitude toward the Abbasid caliph at Baghdad is apparent in a letter written by Patriarch Nikolaos I Mystikos (852–925), the head of the regency council for the boy-emperor Constantine VII, to al-Muqtadir (r. 908–31) ca. 913. In Romily Jenkins' words, the letter expresses sentiments along the following lines: "[A]ll power is from God, and therefore all who exercise it are united in spiritual brotherhood, and should be in constant and friendly discourse with one another." "The Mission of St. Demetrianus of Cyprus to Bagdad," *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves, Mélanges Grégoire* 9 (1949): 267–75 at 270.
43. Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts*, 288n29. The etymology of the term "*siqlatun*" is much

debated. Jacoby's proposal – that it derives from the Greek σιγλᾶτος ("siglatos," sealed) and refers to a decorative pattern of repeating roundels enclosing animal, vegetal, or geometric motifs – is persuasive. "Silk Economics and Cross-cultural Artistic Interaction," 212.

44. Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts,* 101 (par. 73).
45. Muthesius argues that some purple textiles dyed not with murex but with a combination of madder and indigo may have been used as diplomatic gifts to the West. While appearing to the untrained eye to be imperial purple, these textiles were instead imitations. "Silken Diplomacy," 168–9.
46. Freshfield, *The Book of the Eparch*, 16. For discussion of various shades of purple noted in the *Book of the Eparch*, see Starensier, "An Art Historical Study of the Byzantine Silk Industry," 235–40. Starensier hypothesizes that the production of these pale purple textiles outside the imperial workshops represented a practice of outsourcing. Rather than entering the public market, these fabrics would have been returned to the imperial treasury for official use. Ibid., 236 and 239.
47. Liudprand of Cremona, *The Embassy to Constantinople and Other Writings*, ed. John Julius Norwich and trans. F. A. Wright (London: J. M. Dent, 1993), 202–3 (chs. 53–54).
48. On the occasion of Holy Saturday and the Feasts of the Nativity, the *koubikoularioi* (court chamberlains) wore robes with peacocks in conches on a purple ground; on Holy Saturday the head of the *koubikoularioi* was arrayed in robes of Tyre purple. Successors or potential successors to the throne also wore purple and red robes. Starensier, "An Art Historical Study of the Byzantine Silk Industry," 199, 202–3, 209, and 211.
49. Vasiliev, "Harun Ibn Yahya and His Description of Constantinople," 158–9.
50. Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts*, 99 (par. 73).
51. Ibid., 100 (par. 73).
52. Starensier includes within the category of *laurata* anonymous royal hunter silks, anonymous images of the emperor on parade, and textiles inscribed with the emperor's name. "An Art Historical Study of the Byzantine Silk Industry," 465–79. See also Grabar, *L'Empereur*, 7; Henry Maguire, "Magic and Money," 1039; and Lynn Jones and Henry Maguire, "A Description of the Jousts of Manuel I Komnenos," *BMGS* 26 (2002): 104–48, 123–4.
53. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, vol. 2, 278–79; and Cutler, "Les échanges de dons," 53–54.
54. Regarding the definition of bribes versus gifts in medieval Islamic cultures, see Franz Rosenthal, "Gifts and Bribes: The Muslim View," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 108 (1964): 135–44.
55. Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts*, 102 (par. 74).
56. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, vol. 2, pt. 1, 273–306.
57. Ibid., 278; and George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. Joan Hussey (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 276.
58. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, vol. 2, pt. 1, 278; and Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, 276–7. By 940, however, the Abbasid caliphate was to lose its authority as a result of further internal strife, and Sayf al-Dawla abandoned his foray into Byzantine lands in order to secure control of Baghdad. The Byzantine struggle with the Hamdanids continued until 962, when Aleppo, the Hamdanid capital, surrendered to Nikephoros II Phokas. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, 284.
59. Ibn al-Zubayr dates the event to 1052–3, but he identifies the emperor who donated the gifts as Michael, although Constantine IX ruled from 1042 to 1055. Qaddumi believes that the text is in error and the emperor who sent the gift was most likely Constantine IX. Her attribution is further strengthened by Constantine's involvement with the reconstruction of the Holy Sepulcher, to which the imperial delegation traveled after delivering gifts to the Fatimid caliph. Furthermore, Constantine sent gifts to al-Mustansir in 1045, as Ibn al-Zubayr reports. *The Book of Gifts*, 108–9 (par. 82).
60. Ibid., 110 (par. 85). This entry is also noteworthy for the information it provides about the transport of diplomatic gifts. The gifts arrived on a Byzantine warship, and the heavy items were then taken to the caliph in a cargo boat while the finer items were transported separately.
61. The mention of monetary value perhaps indicates that the liquid was a trade item with which the Fatimids were familiar and could price accordingly. The large quantity would therefore have been all the more impressive.
62. Cutler, "The Parallel Universes of Arab and Byzantine Art," 638.
63. Maria Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation: The Oneirocriticon of Achmet and Its Arabic Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 366–7.

64. Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts*, pars. 17, 37, 45, 53, 54, 58, 59, 68, 72, 79, 80, 81, and 106. Also see Cutler, "Les échanges de dons," 64.
65. At least one other Christian ruler sent slaves to Muslim recipients. The Frankish queen Bertha reportedly included "twenty Slav eunuchs [and] twenty lovely and gentle Slav slave girls" in her offering to the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtafi ibn Allah in 906. Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts*, 91 (par. 69).
66. Fatimid holdings in Syria and the Hijaz were jeopardized by Turkish expansion, and the Fatimids cultivated alliances with other groups who were likewise enemies of the Turks. In particular, the Fatimids supported the Buyid ruler Khusraw-Firuz (al-Malik al-Rahim) (r. 1048–57), who had been in service to the Abbasids. When the caliph at Baghdad learned of the Buyid's treachery, he invited Tughrul Beg to take Baghdad, which the latter did in 1055, thereby undoing the Fatimid efforts to secure power in the Near East. The Byzantines eventually allied with the Seljuqs, which ultimately led to a break with the Fatimids.
67. Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts*, 110.
68. Kennedy, "Byzantine-Arab Diplomacy," 143.
69. Paragraph 85 also offers an indirect reminder of the intra-Islamic intrigue constantly at play in the midst of Byzantine-Islamic interactions. The Fatimid vizier al-Hasan ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Yazuri (r. 1051–59), who interacted with the Byzantine delegation to Egypt, was later executed by the Fatimid caliph al-Mustansir on the grounds that al-Yazuri had conspired with the Seljuqs against the Fatimids. Interestingly, al-Yazuri had himself assisted Arslan al-Basasiri (d. 1060), the Turkish slave-turned-Buyid military leader, who revolted against the Abbasid caliph al-Qa'im bi-Amr Allah. Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts*, 297n1.
70. Ibid., 114.
71. Although *The Book of Gifts* does not specify the identity of the Byzantine emperor who presented the saddles to al-Muizz, John I Tzimiskes (r. 969–76) held the throne in 972.
72. Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts*, 114 (par. 99).
73. Ibid., 166–224. Also see Avinoam Shalem, "The Fall of al-Mada'in: Some Literary References Concerning Sasanian Spoils of War in Medieval Islamic Treasuries," *Iran* 32 (1994): 77–81.
74. Nicolette Trahoulia, "The Venice *Alexander Romance*, Hellenic Institute codex Gr. 5: A Study of Alexander the Great as an Imperial Paradigm in Byzantine Art and Literature" (Ph.D. diss.: Harvard University, 1997), 10–11.
75. Ibid., 48.
76. Psellus, *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*, 241.
77. George Galavaris, "Alexander the Great Conqueror and Captive of Death: His Various Images in Byzantine Art," *Revue d'art canadienne* 16.1 (1989): 12–18, fig. 5.
78. A similar image appears as the central motif in a well-known crown composed of enamel plaques (now in Kiev), which makes a clear association between Alexander and medieval royal authority. André Grabar, "Images de l'ascension d'Alexandre en Italie at en Russie" (1964), repr. in *L'Art de la fin d l'antiquité et du moyen âge*, 3 vols. (Paris: Collège de France, 1968), vol. 1, 291–6 at 294, vol. 3, pl. 66c. Regarding Alexander's ascent in text and image, also see Heribert J. Gleixner, *Das Alexanderbild der Byzantiner* (Munich: W. and J. M. Salzer, 1961); Galavaris, "Alexander the Great Conqueror and Captive of Death," 16–17; Patrizia Angiolini Martinelli, "L'Ascensione di Alessandro in un pluteo del museo di Mistrà," *Milion* 3 (1995): 271–9; and Trahoulia, "The Venice *Alexander Romance*," 162–215 and 227–35.
79. Priscilla Soucek, "Bowl with the Ascension of Alexander," in *GOB*, 422–3, cat. no. 281. For the Byzantine attribution, see T. Steppan, "The Artukid Bowl: Courtly Art in the Middle Byzantine Period and Its Relation to the Islamic East," in *Perceptions of Byzantium and Its Neighbors (843–1261)*, ed. Olenka Z. Pevny, pp. 84–101 (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000). Scott Redford, "How Islamic Is It? The Innsbruck Plate and Its Setting," *Muqarnas* 8 (1990): 119–35, argues for a Georgian attribution and cites earlier bibliography positing an Islamic provenience.
80. On this object, see also Hoffman, "Pathways of Portability," 39–42; and Walker, "Cross-cultural Reception in the Absence of Texts," 115.
81. Michel M. Mazzaoui, "Alexander the Great and the Arab Historians," *Graeco-Arabica* 4 (1991): 33–44 at 37.
82. This name would have resonated with representations of Alexander on coins that showed him with the horns of Jupiter Ammon, the god whom he supposedly incarnated. T. Fahd, "La version arabe du Roman d'Alexandre," *Graeco-Arabica* 4 (1991): 25–32 at 27. Although Alexander was known by the epithet Dhu'l Qarnayn, the Qur'anic reference may relate

to an earlier prophet by the same name. *EI*, vol. 1, 961–2, and vol. 2, 534. Also see Rudolf Macuch, "Pseudo-Callisthenes Orientalis and the Problem of *Dhu l-qarnain*," *Graeco-Arabica* 4 (1991): 223–64; and Mazzaoui, "Alexander the Great and the Arab Historians," 33–43.

83. Pseudo-Kallisthenes, *The Greek Alexander Romance*, trans. Richard Stoneman (London: Penguin Books, 1991); John Andrew Boyle, "The Alexander Romance in the East and West," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 60 (1977): 13–27; and Stephen Gero, "The Alexander Legend in Byzantium: Some Literary Gleanings," *DOP* 46 (1992): 83–7.

84. There is no extant medieval version of the Alexander Romance in Arabic, but the prominence of Alexander in medieval Arabic literature and folklore makes clear that his legend was well known, either from Pahlavi or Syriac versions of the story, which would have been available to Muslim authors, or through an Arabic version of the text that has not survived. Fahd, "La Version arabe du Roman d'Alexandre," 25–31.

85. A striking statement in support of Alexander's role as a symbolic mediator in Byzantine relations with Eastern medieval powers postdates by several centuries the tenth- to eleventh-century context under consideration here, but is nonetheless worthy of mention. The fourteenth-century author Pseudo-Kodinos states that while the Byzantine emperor inherited rule over the West through Constantine, he inherited dominion over the East through Alexander. According to this concept, the Byzantines conceived of their empire as a bridge between East and West. Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des offices*, trans. Jen Verpeaux (Paris: Éditions du centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1966), 206–7; cited by Trahoulia, "The Venice *Alexander Romance*," 42.

86. Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts*, 114. Over the course of al-Mustansir's long rule, there were thirteen Byzantine emperors. It is unclear which emperor would have sent the saddles, but at least two attested delegations may have provided the opportunity. During al-Mustansir's minority, his mother achieved a détente with the Byzantines, renewing a ten-year truce with the emperor Michael V in 1036; in 1047 the Byzantine emperor Constantine IX Monomachos sent an embassy to Cairo to renew the treaty. Abbas Hamdani, "Byzantine Fatimid Relations before the Battle of Manzikert," *Byzantine Studies* 1.2 (1974): 169–79 at 174.

87. Grabar, "The Shared Culture of Objects," 116.

88. Byzantine-Fatimid relations up to the third quarter of the tenth century were unstable, as the two groups vied for power in the Mediterranean and Near East. During the first decades of the tenth century, the Fatimids were based at Mahdiya on the eastern coast of modern-day Tunisia, and Fatimid-Byzantine confrontations in the Mediterranean focused on the islands of Cyprus and Crete, which passed between Byzantine and Fatimid control. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, 297.

89. Hamdani, "Byzantine Fatimid Relations," 169–79.

90. Masudi, *Les prairies d'or*, trans. C.-A.-C. Barbier de Meynard and A. Pavet de Courteille, 2 vols. (1861–1917; repr. Paris: Société Asiatique, 1962), vol. 2, 259. For a general survey of the ancient and medieval sources referring to the tomb of Alexander, see Harry E. Tzalas, "'The Tomb of Alexander the Great': The History and Legend in the Greco-Roman and Arab Times," *Graeco-Arabica* 5 (1993): 329–54.

91. Constantine VII, *De Administrando Imperio*, 48–9, lines 19–20 (ch. 1).

92. Priscilla Soucek interprets the gift as an anticipation of al-Mustansir's support against the Seljuqs and suggests that horse trappings would have been welcomed because of the Fatimids' extensive practice of public processions on horseback. "Byzantium and the Islamic East," in *GOB*, 402–11, at 407. On Fatimid equine pageantry, see Paula Sanders, *Ritual, Politics, and the City in Fatimid Cairo* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

93. Constantine VII, *De Administrando Imperio*, 50–3, lines 10–13 (ch. 4).

94. Additional gifts accompanying this mission included one hundred silver candlesticks with candles, 150 Chinese porcelain dishes of apricot color, garments of fabric interwoven with gold thread, several hundred other pieces of cloth, and ten baskets with camphor and aloe wood. These gifts were valued at 2,400 *dinars* and were accompanied by an additional 50,000 *dinars* in cash. Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts*, 112; and Grabar, "The Shared Culture of Objects," 122.

95. For an overview of Solomon's role in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic lore, see Rachel Milstein, ed., *King Solomon's Seal* (Jerusalem: Museum of the History of Jerusalem, 1995).

96. A. Kartsonis, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 186–200.
97. Hugo Buchthal, "The Exaltation of David," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 37 (1974): 330–3 at 332.
98. Thomas F. Mathews, "The Epigrams of Leo Sakellarios," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 43 (1977): 94–133 at 131.
99. Robert Ousterhout, "Rebuilding the Temple: Constantine Monomachos and the Holy Sephulchre," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 48 (1989): 66–78. Scholars suggest that the depiction of Solomon at the eleventh-century church of Nea Moni on Chios, which portrays him with a beard rather than clean shaven, may be intended to assimilate the biblical king with the emperor Constantine IX. Doula Mouriki, *The Mosaics of Nea Moni on Chios* (Athens: Commercial Bank of Greece, 1985), 137–8; Ousterhout, "Rebuilding the Temple," 78; and Henry Maguire, "The Mosaics of Nea Moni: An Imperial Reading," *DOP* 46 (1992): 205–14.
100. Also see Christopher Walter, "The Intaglio of Solomon in the Benaki Museum and the Origins of the Iconography of Warrior Saints," *Deltion tes Christianikes Archaiologikes Hetaireias* 15 (1989–90): 33–42, esp. 35.
101. Alexander Kazhdan et al., "Solomon," in *ODB*, vol. 3, 1925.
102. Shaun Tougher, "The Wisdom of Leo VI," in *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th Centuries*, ed. Paul Magdalino, pp. 171–80 (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), 171–3.
103. Buchthal argues that Constantine VII likewise cast his son, Romanos II, as a Solomon to Constantine's David. "The Exaltation of David," 332. Also see Paul Magdalino, "Observations on the Nea Ekklesia of Basil I," *JÖB* 37 (1987): 51–64.
104. C. C. McCown, ed., *The Testament of Solomon* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1922), 105–8.
105. Ibid., 3–4 and 100–4.
106. According to a sixth-century text, the *Breviarius de Hierosolyma*, the ring with the Seal of Solomon was venerated as a relic in Jerusalem. P. Geyer, *Itinera Hierosolymitana saeculi* (Vindobonae: F. Tempsky, 1898), 154. The late fourth-century pilgrim Egeria venerated both the ring and twelve silver jars said to have held demons overpowered by Solomon. Egérie, *Journal de voyage*, ed. P. Maraval (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1982), 64; cited by Walter, "The Intaglio of Solomon," 36, with additional references to the veneration of Solomon's relics in Jerusalem. B. Bagatti's suggestion that the Persian conquest of Jerusalem would have terminated Solomon's cult requires reconsideration in light of the importance of Solomon within medieval Islamic popular culture. "I Giudeo-cristiani e l'anello di Salomone," *Recherches de science religieuse* 60 (1972): 151–60 at 151.
107. Early Byzantine apotropaic objects demonstrate its popularity, including a bronze ring dated ca. 600 excavated in Anemourion, inscribed "holy, holy, holy, the seal of Solomon holds the evil eye" (Walter, "The Intaglio of Solomon in the Benaki Museum," 36) and a sixth- to seventh-century silver armband, which integrates two Solomonic star symbols in one of its medallions. Also see J. Spier, "Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 56 (1993): 25–62.
108. Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, 83; and Spier, "Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets," 50.
109. The other prototypical ruler categorized as a "believer" was Alexander the Great. H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers, *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1953), 549.
110. For example, see Qur'an 4:163–5, in which Solomon is listed along with other pre-Islamic figures (Jesus, Job, Aaron, etc.) as an apostle of God.
111. Priscilla Soucek, "Solomon's Throne/Solomon's Bath: Model of Metaphor?" *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 109–34, at 109.
112. As a topos in Persian literature, Solomon was noted for his ability to communicate with all creatures and control both men and demons. Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah al-Kisa'i, *Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisa'i (Qisas al-anbiya')*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston, Jr. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978), xxii and 300–21. On Islamic magic and art in general, see Johann Christopher Bürgel, *The Feather of Simurgh: The "Licit Magic" of the Arts in Medieval Islam* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), esp. 11, 15, 17, and 106 for Solomon; and Francis Maddison, *Science, Tools, and Magic*,

vol. 12: *Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art* (London: Nour Foundation, 1997), esp. 60.

113. Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts*, 300n3 (par. 91).
114. Soucek, "Solomon's Throne," 111–24.
115. The name Da'ud (David) was also popular. Julie Scott Meisami, *The Sea of Precious Virtues (Baḥr al-Favā'id)* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1991), 5.
116. For example, an early eighth-century Umayyad coin from Damascus, Syria, shows the Seal of Solomon in pentagram form. Milstein, *The Seal of Solomon*, 35. The symbol appeared in other media as well, such as glass and metal. Rachel Hasson, "An Enameled Glass Bowl with 'Solomon's Seal': The Meaning of a Pattern," in *Gilded and Enameled Glass from the Middle East*, ed. R. Ward, pp. 41–4 (London: British Museum Press, 1988). Twelfth- to thirteenth-century Ayyubid coins show the motif in hexagram form. Paul Belog, *The Coinage of the Ayyubids* (London: Royal Numismatic Society, 1980); and Milstein, *The Seal of Solomon*, 35.
117. Milstein, *The Seal of Solomon*, 33–4; Hasson, "An Enameled Glass Bowl with 'Solomon's Seal,'" 42; and Bishr Farès, "Figures Magiques," in *Aus der Welt der islamischen Kunst*, ed. Richard Ettinghausen (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1959), 154–6, fig. 2.
118. al-Kisa'i, *Tales of the Prophets*, 288–321.
119. Meisami, *The Sea of Precious Virtues*, esp. 69, 307, 314–16, and 321.
120. Regarding additional talismanic objects recognized by Byzantine and Islamic viewers alike, see the account of the late ninth- or early tenth-century Abbasid "prisoner" at the Byzantine court, Harun ibn Yahya, who reported on the magical properties of statues in Constantinople. Simeonova, "Foreigners in Tenth-century Byzantium," 239–40.
121. Dagron, "Trônes pour un empereur," 179–203 (Athens: Institute for Byzantine Studies, 2003), 189; G. Brett, "The Automata in the 'Byzantine Throne of Solomon,'" *Speculum* 29 (1954): 477–87. On the throne of Solomon and the pageantry of Byzantine diplomatic receptions, see Cormack, "But Is It Art?" 225, with earlier bibliography; and James Trilling, "Daedalus and the Nightingale: Art and Technology in the Myth of the Byzantine Court," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire, pp. 217–30 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997). For the possible identification of two actual medieval Islamic automata, see Anna Contadini et al., "Beasts that Roared: The Pisa Griffin and the New York Lion," in *Cairo to Kabul: Afghan and Islamic Studies presented to Ralph Pinder-Wilson*, ed. Warwick Bell and Leonard Harrow, pp. 65–83 (London: Melisende, 2002).
122. Liudprand, *The Embassy to Constantinople*, 153 (bk. 6, ch. 5).
123. Constantine VII, *De ceremoniis*, vol. 8, 566–98 (bk. 2, ch. 15).
124. Tougher, "The Wisdom of Leo VI," 174.
125. Soucek, "Solomon's Throne," 111–14 and 120–4.
126. Tougher, "The Wisdom of Leo VI," 174; and Ihor Ševčenko, "The Greek Source of the Inscription of Solomon's Chalice in the *Vita Constantini*," in *To Honor Roman Jakobson*, 3 vols. (Paris: Mouton, 1967), vol. 3, 1805–17.
127. Vasiliev, "Harun Ibn Yahya and His Description of Constantinople," 149–63; Cormack, "But Is It Art?" 226; and Tougher, "The Wisdom of Leo VI," 174.
128. Ibn al-Zubayr, *The Book of Gifts*, 177–78 (paragraphs 209 and 212).
129. Ibn al-Zubayr reports, "Then it [the mirror] came into the possession of the Umayyad kings and stayed in their treasury until the time of the Abbasids, who acquired it along with whatever [else] they had taken from [the Umayyad] wealth." Ibid., 175 (par. 202).
130. The gift was recorded to have been given in the Islamic year 448 (1056–7). Ibid., 112 (par. 91). During this time the Byzantine emperor was Michael VI Stratiotikos (r. August 1056–August 1057), but his short and uneventful rule hardly merits the Seljuq ruler's gift. Isaac I Komnenos, Michael's successor, is the more likely recipient because he was considered a military threat to the Seljuqs, thereby explaining why Tughrul Beg would attempt to appease him with such a generous offering.
131. Yet the fact that *The Book of Gifts* is a Fatimid text – and that the Fatimids and Seljuqs were not allied – raises the possibility that the Great Seljuq sultan Tughrul Beg was being subtly critiqued through the gift that the Fatimid sources claimed he had presented, perhaps suggesting that the object indicated his subservience to the Byzantines.

While these circumstances could argue for the fabricated (or at least elaborated) character of the purported gift, they would also indicate a Fatimid understanding that diplomatic presents expressed meaning and that these meanings could be engineered to convey the nature of relations between giver and receiver.

132. Cormack, "But Is It Art?" 228.
133. Cutler productively investigates the economic dimension of gift exchange as a function of medieval trade relations. "Gifts and Gift Exchange," 247–78. Also see Durak, "Commerce and Networks of Exchange."
134. Geary, "Sacred Commodities," 174–87.
135. For earlier arguments to this effect, see Walker, "Exotic Elements in Middle Byzantine Secular Art and Aesthetics," 174–8; and Shalem, "Objects as Carriers of Real or Contrived Memories," 109 and 115.
136. Kalavrezou, "Helping Hands for the Empire," 53–79. Also see K. Holum and G. Vikan, "The Trier Ivory, Adventus Ceremonial, and the Relics of St. Stephen," *DOP* 33 (1979): 115–33.
137. Kalavrezou, "Helping Hands for the Empire," 55.
138. Ibid., 59.
139. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions*; and Weiner, "Inalienable Wealth." Also see Godelier's concepts of "keeping-for-giving" and "giving-for-keeping," which he proposes as an amendment to Weiner's "keeping-while-giving" model. *The Enigma of the Gift*, esp. 8–9 and 32–6.
140. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions*, 10.
141. Ibid., 10.
142. Geary, "Sacred Commodities," 183.
143. Ibid., 183.
144. Lynn Jones, "Questionable Gifts: Constantine VII and Relics of the True Cross," in *Twenty-Eighth Annual Byzantine Studies Conference Abstracts of Papers* (Columbus: The Ohio State University, 2002), 28. Jones's study offers an intriguing parallel to the account of the relics of Alexander in *The Book of Gifts*. She argues that Norman-Sicilian inventions of relic donations from the Byzantine emperor functioned as a means of, in one instance, increasing Norman prestige through receipt of Byzantine holy relics and, in another instance, as evidence of shifts in medieval royal authority that posited the Byzantines as no longer powerful enough to safeguard these sacred items.
145. Regarding Seljuq emulation of and dialogue with late Roman and Byzantine artistic traditions, see Marianne Barrucand, "The Miniatures of the Daqāʿiq al-Haqāʿiq (Bibliothèque Nationale, Pers. 174): A Testimony to the Cultural Diversity of Medieval Anatolia," *Islamic Art* 4 (1990): 113–42; Scott Redford, "The Seljuqs of Rum and the Antique," *Muqarnas* 10 (1993): 148–56; and Eva Baer, "Foreign Models and Islamic Interpretations in the Thirteenth-Century Metalwork: A Preliminary Note," in *The Art of the Saljuqs in Iran and Anatolia*, ed. Robert Hillenbrand, pp. 218–23 (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1994).

CHAPTER FOUR. EXPROPRIATION: RHETORICAL IMAGES OF THE EMPEROR AND THE ARTICULATION OF DIFFERENCE

1. Regarding these developments and Byzantine reactions to them, see Jean-Claude Cheynet, "La résistance aux Turcs en Asie Mineure entre Mantzikert et la Première Croisade," in *Eupsykhia: Mélanges offerts à Hélène Ahrweiler*, 2 vols. (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1998), vol. 1, 131–47; Peter Frankopan, "The Fall of Nicaea and the Towns of Western Asia Minor to the Turks in the Later 11th Century: The Curious Case of Nikophoros Melissenos," *Byzantion* 76 (2006): 153–84; and Frankopan, "Challenges to Imperial Authority in Byzantium: Revolts on Crete and Cyprus at the End of the 11th Century," *Byzantion* 74 (2004): 382–402.
2. These visitors tended to be relatively low-ranking members of the extended royal family, and some turned to Byzantium for assistance in defending themselves from internal Seljuq competitors. See Dimitri Korobeinikov, "A Sultan in Constantinople: The Feasts of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kay-Khusraw I," in *Eat, Drink, and Be Merry (Luke 12:19) – Food and Wine in Byzantium*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Kallirroe Linardou, pp. 93–108 (Ashgate: Variorum, 2007).
3. John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, trans. Charles Brand (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 201–8; and Choniates, *Historia*, 123.74–80, 420.31; cited and discussed by Korobeinikov, "A Sultan in Constantinople," 94–5. Also see Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 77.
4. The Byzantines considered the sultan of the Seljuqs of Rum inferior to their emperor,

while the sultan of the Great Seljuqs was held in higher esteem. Gyula Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturca*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1958), vol. 2, 286–7.

5. Regarding Turkish foreigners in Constantinople and Byzantine attitudes toward them, see Brand, "The Turkish Element in Byzantium," 1–25; N. Oikonomides, "The Turks in the Byzantine Rhetoric of the Twelfth Century," in *Decision Making and Change in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Caesar E. Farah, pp. 149–55 (Kirksville: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1993), esp. 151–2; Necipoğlu, "The Coexistence of Turks and Greeks in Medieval Anatolia," 58–76; Korobeinikov, "A Sultan in Constantinople," 93–108; and Anderson, "Islamic Spaces and Diplomacy in Constantinople," 86–113. Regarding Byzantines in the Seljuq nobility, see O. Turan, "Les souverains Seldjoukides et leurs sujets non-musulmans," *Studia Islamica* 1 (1953): 65–100.
6. A rectangular notch carved into the middle top of one of the long panels marks where a metal lock was once installed. The lock notch indicates that this plaque served as the front panel for the casket, and that the box originally had a lid. Along the top edge of the long back panel are visible smaller notches where the hinges for the lid would have been attached.
7. John Beckwith, "The Influence of Islamic Art on Western Medieval Art," *Apollo* 103 (1976): 270–81 at 270–2.
8. Beckwith, "The Influence of Islamic Art," 270, fig. 1; and Cutler, *The Hand of the Master*, 154–5, fig. 174.
9. The fact that the Darmstadt Casket does not draw from a single narrative has led to its generic identification as a "mythological" casket (Maria Georgopoulou, "Sides of a Casket with Mythological Scenes," in *GOB*, 227–8), but this categorization is misleading because the figures are not unified by reference to classical myths.
10. Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 66–7, cat. no. 125, pl. LXXVI.
11. Cutler, *The Hand of the Master*, 155.
12. Georgopoulou, "Sides of a Casket," 227–8.
13. Despite longstanding dissatisfaction with the dates assigned to ivories in Goldschmidt and Weitzmann's two-volume corpus, art historians have been slow to reattribute ivory carvings. For efforts in this direction, see Cutler, *The Hand of the Master*; Ioli Kalavrezou, "Ivories Reconsidered," in *Twenty-Sixth Annual Byzantine Studies Conference Abstracts of Papers*, pp. 132–3 (Cambridge: Harvard University, October 26–9, 2000); and Anthousa Papagiannaki, "Byzantine Ivory and Bone Caskets with Secular Decoration, 9th to 12th Centuries" (Ph.D. diss. University of Oxford, 2006).
14. See Cutler, "On Byzantine Boxes," 32–5.
15. On this point, I disagree with Cutler, who argues that the Darmstadt Casket does not show evidence of a premeditated program or reveal the intentions of its patron or designer. *The Hand of the Master*, 154–5.
16. Some tenth-century ivory devotional plaques depict single scenes from the lives of Christ or the Virgin enclosed by elaborate baldachins supported by arches, but they do not make use of a comparable repeating architectural frame. *GOB*, 151–6, cat. nos. 97–102. They tend to employ lattice patterns composed of repeating circles, rather than linear, woven patterns as seen in the Darmstadt columns and canopies.
17. *LIMC*, vol. 5, 10, no. 1724.
18. Although the Darmstadt Casket does not employ scenes from a single narrative series or depict these vignettes in chronologically sequential order – as is often the case in antique sarcophagi – the Darmstadt scenes are connected thematically. In this respect they recall the organizational principles of early Christian works of art, including the well-known sarcophagus of Junius Bassus and the Brescia *lipsanothek*, both of which are organized according to typology rather than narrative sequence. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *The Iconography of the Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); and Catherine Brown Tkacz, *The Key to the Brescia Casket: Typology and the Early Christian Imagination* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2002).
19. Evgenidou, *Byzantium: An Oecumenical Empire*, 47, cat. no. 7.
20. Additional figures adorn the bottom of the cup, but the relief in this area has been lost, and only the figures' heads are preserved.
21. Apollodorus, *The Library*, vol. 1, trans. Sir James George Frazer (1921; repr., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939).
22. Warren Treadgold, *The Nature of the Bibliotheca of Photius* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks,

1980), 103 and 151, no. 186.2. I am not arguing that the artist or patron of this box composed the Herakles scenes in direct consultation with Apollodoros's handbook. Rather Apollodoros's text documents continued access to these stories during the middle Byzantine era.

23. Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, vol. 1, 66; Kurt Weitzmann, *Greek Mythology in Byzantine Art* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1951), 162; and Apollodorus, *The Library*, vol. 1, 200–3 (bk. 2, ch. 5, par. 8). An early second-century Roman sarcophagus shows a strikingly similar depiction of the event. See *LIMC*, vol. 5, 9, fig. 1714. For discussion of illustrative cycles of the Herakles epic in ancient and Byzantine art, see Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex: A Study of the Origin and Method of Text Illustration*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 22–6, and Weitzmann, *Greek Mythology*, 157–65.
24. Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, vol. 1, 66; and Georgopoulou, "Sides of a Casket," 227.
25. Apollodorus, *The Library*, vol. 1, 176–7 (bk. 2, ch. 4, par. 9).
26. *LIMC*, vol. 4, 833, cat. no. 1666.
27. Orpheus holds a lyre with a similarly shaped sound box in late antique mosaic depictions. Ilona Julia Jesnick, *The Image of Orpheus in Roman Mosaic*, *BAR International Series*, 671 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 1997), 191–2, fig. 27a (esp. Adana, Oudna, and Palermo) and 27b (esp. Thysdrus [El Djem] and Vienna); and 263, fig. 139.
28. Although muses do not appear in scenes of Herakles and Linos, Herakles was associated with muses, a type known as "Herakles Musarum," most notably through a temple founded ca. 189 at Rome. See *LIMC*, vol. 4, 810–17 and cat. nos. 1438–82. A series of ten coins minted in 66 B.C.E. at Rome show Apollo on the reverse with Herakles playing the lyre (inscribed HERCVLES MVSARVM) or one of the nine muses on the reverse. See *LIMC*, vol. 4, 814, fig. 1482, and vol. 7, 1004–5, fig. 268a–i.
29. M. Wegner, *Die Musensarkophage* (Berlin: Mann, 1966), 83–4, pl. 31a, no. 219; and Anna Marguerite McCann, *Roman Sarcophagi in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1978), 48–9, no. 50.
30. See McCann, *Roman Sarcophagi*, 131, no. 167.
31. For a discussion of muses as symbols of the deceased's status as a man of learning, see Paul Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates: The Image of the Intellectual in Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 267–84 and 327–9; and H.-I. Marrou, *Mousikos Aner: Étude sur les scènes de la vie intellectuelle figurant sur les monuments funéraires romains* (Grenoble: Didier and Richard, 1938).
32. For Herakles cleaning the Augean stables, see Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, vol. 1, 26–7, no. 10; and Weitzmann, *Greek Mythology*, 161, no. 189. For the drunken Herakles, see *LIMC*, vol. 4, 817.
33. To my knowledge, the two figures scaling the column are not attested in any other work of Byzantine art. They do, however, find a parallel in a mid-eleventh-century Western medieval illustrated Gospel book showing the Presentation of the Virgin at the Temple (New York, Morgan Library, MS. G.44, fol. 2) in which nude figures embrace the bases of two pillars that support pagan sculptures of the *Spinario* (a young boy removing a thorn from his foot). The comparison alone does not support any direct relationship between the manuscript and Darmstadt Casket or the cultures that produced them, but it may indicate a chronological estimation for the motif (which was unusual in both traditions) as well as a common visual vocabulary for the depiction of pagan idols.
34. Goldschmidt and Weitzmann read the scene as Herakles in repose after cleaning the Augean stables and relate the type here to the colossal statue of Herakles by Lysippos preserved in the Hippodrome at Constantinople. The pose of Herakles on the Darmstadt Casket does not conform, however, to the Augean Stable type, in which Herakles collapses forward in exhaustion and rests his chin on his hand. Sarah Bassett, *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 152–4. Goldschmidt and Weitzmann identify the figure at the left as one of the Dioskouroi, again recalling a statue – albeit of twins – that was preserved in the Hippodrome. They interpret the stand in the background as another fixture on the Hippodrome *spina*. *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, 67; the general outline of their reading is followed by Georgopoulou, "Sides of a Casket," 227.

35. Apollodorus, *The Library*, vol. 2, 237–41 (II, vi, 2).
36. Weitzmann demonstrates that Byzantine depictions of oracles in Taphou 14 show a high degree of inventiveness and were not based on preexisting or even contemporaneous types. *Greek Mythology*, pl. XXIII, fig. 78. The Darmstadt Casket can be understood as similarly innovative. Also see Weitzmann, "Representations of Hellenic Oracles in Byzantine Manuscripts," in *Mansel'e Armağan*, 3 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1974), vol. 1, 397–410. On the topic of "inventiveness" in middle Byzantine secular art, see Henry Maguire, "The Profane Aesthetic in Byzantine Art and Literature," *DOP* 54 (2000): 189–205, esp. 190–7; A. R. Littlewood, ed., *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art, and Music* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1995); and Maguire and Maguire, *Other Icons*, passim.
37. *LIMC*, vol. 4, 772, no. 916.
38. *GOB*, 231–2, cat. nos. 154 A and B.
39. This distinction is also apparent in an illumination of the martyrdom of Saint Simeon from the Menologion of Basil II (Vatican Library, Cod. Gr. 1613, fol. 46r), dated ca. 985. Two pagan cult statues in the background parallel the depiction of the cult figure on the Darmstadt Casket, but the statues in the illumination stand in relaxed positions, their heads bent to the side. George Galavaris, *Zographike Vyzantinon Cheirographon* (Athens: Ekdotike Athenon, 1995), 73, fig. 49.
40. The Darmstadt statue also finds a close parallel in a scene of Saint George destroying idols in a twelfth- to thirteenth-century Byzantine carved wooden icon. On the right side frame, in the fourth vignette from the top, Saint George raises his hand to strike a pagan idol, which is stout, naked, and rendered in a stiff, frontal manner that is comparable to that of the Darmstadt Casket cult statue. Like the Darmstadt Casket figure, the sculpture in the icon holds a staff in its proper right hand. Olenka Pevny, "Relief Icon with Saint George and Scenes from His Life," in *GOB*, 299–300, cat. no. 202; and Liudmyla Milyaeva, "The Icon of St. George, with Scenes from His Life, from the Town of Mariupol," in *Perceptions of Byzantium and Its Neighbors (843–1261)*, ed. Olenka Pevny, pp. 102–17 (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 112–13, fig. 10.
41. Alternate readings of this scene include the marriage bed of Alexander and Roxanne, as argued by Maguire and Maguire, *Other Icons*, 144–5. They relate the vignette to Manganeios Prodromos's twelfth-century comparison of a portrait of the family of the emperor Manuel I to a painting of Alexander and Roxanne described by the second-century satirist Lucian. In the painting, Roxanne is unwillingly dragged to the bed of her new husband by erotes. While this reading is plausible, and the comparison with Manuel I fits well with my larger interpretation of the casket's imperial program and date, I believe that the internal logic of the casket supports an identification of the figure as Herakles because the reclining male figure resembles Herakles in the other scenes.
42. Apollodorus, *The Library*, 252–7 (bk. 2, ch. 7, par. 4).
43. *LIMC*, vol. 3, 48, cat. no. 21. Also see a Greek bronze mirror relief dated ca. 300 B.C.E. Ibid., 47, cat. no. 9. On the iconography of the rape of Auge in ancient art, see L. Lacroix, "Un aspect méconnu de la legende d'Héraclès sur une monnaie de Pergame," *Revue belge de numismatique* 102 (1956): 5–30.
44. There are eighteen Byzantine manuscripts preserving five separate recensions of the romance. For analysis of this textual tradition, see Trahoulia, *The Greek Alexander Romance*, 42, with earlier bibliography. Also see Richard Stoneman, "The Alexander Romance: From History to Fiction," in *Greek Fiction. The Greek Novel in Context*, ed. J. R. Morgan and R. Stoneman, pp. 117–29 (London: Routledge, 1994), 118.
45. Pseudo-Kallisthenes, *The Greek Alexander Romance*, 123. Interpretation of this panel as the ascension of Alexander is broadly accepted. See Trahoulia, "The Venice *Alexander Romance*," 162–215 and 227–34; Grabar, "Images de l'ascension d'Alexandre"; Galavaris, "Alexander the Great Conqueror and Captive of Death," 12–18; and Vladislav P. Darkevich, *Byzantine Secular Art in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (in Russian) (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1975), 154–8.
46. The *loros* appears commonly in middle Byzantine depictions of the emperor, although textual descriptions of court ceremonial, particularly those found in the tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies*, note that in reality the regalis was used rarely. It was employed in imperial

ceremonial at Easter and during the reception of foreign diplomats. As such, it has been argued that the item served as the embodiment of Byzantine imperial power and authority, although more so in symbolic representation than in actual practice. Jennifer L. Ball, *Byzantine Dress: Representations of Secular Dress in Eighth- to Twelfth-Century Painting* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 16–29. For additional discussion of the *loros* in middle Byzantine art and imperial regalia, see Parani, "The Romanos Ivory and the New Tokali Kilise," 15–28; and Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 18–26. Similarities in Alexander's regalia to that of emperors of the Macedonian dynasty are commonly cited as evidence for a tenth- to eleventh-century date for the object. In particular the crown and physiognomy have been compared to numismatic portraits of Romanos I Lekapenos (r. 920–44). Trahoulia, "The Venice *Alexander Romance*," 177; and Georgopoulou, "Sides of a Casket," 228.

47. It has been proposed that this vignette may instead represent a generic scene of imperial *adventus*. Georgopoulou, "Sides of a Casket," 227. According to this argument, the figure in the tree would represent a subject welcoming the arriving emperor. If this is the case, his nudity requires explanation.
48. Pseudo-Kallisthenes, *The Greek Alexander Romance*, 125.
49. Alternatively, the scene may illustrate Alexander encountering the gymnosophists, the ascetic philosophers of India, who wore no clothes and were said to live in caves and huts. Maguire and Maguire, *Other Icons*, 103–5, figs. 95 and 96.
50. For discussion of military saint iconography, see Christopher Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); and Henry Maguire, *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 74–9 and 186–93. Regarding the growing popularity of dragons in Byzantine hagiography beginning as early as the ninth century, see Monica White, "The Rise of the Dragon in Middle Byzantine Hagiography," *BMGS* 32.2 (2008): 149–67.
51. Regarding the iconography of Saint George on horseback and slaying a dragon, snake, or human foe, see Walter, *The Warrior Saints*, 127–9. Also see Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen*, vol. 1, 67. Evidence that Saint George was iconographically distinguished by his lack of a beard in twelfth-century Byzantine art is indicated by a steatite icon, possibly produced in Constantinople, which depicts Saints Theodore, George, and Demetrios; the latter two are unbearded. Olenka Pevny, "Icon with Three Military Saints," in *GOB*, 300–1, cat. no. 203. For additional twelfth-century depictions of Saint George, which also show him clean shaven, see *GOB*, 122–4, cat. nos. 69–70.
52. Walter, *The Warrior Saints*, 134.
53. For a brief summary of Herakles' imperial connections in the Byzantine era, see Panagiotis Agapitos and Anthony Cutler, "Herakles," in *ODB*, vol. 2, 917–18. For a full account of Alexander's significance in Byzantine typology, particularly that relating to the emperor, see Trahoulia, "The Venice *Alexander Romance*," 9–52 and 236–43.
54. Agapitos and Cutler, "Herakles," in *ODB*, vol. 2, 917; *CSHB*, vol. 5, 48, lines 17–18.
55. *CSHB*, vol. 33, 216, lines 2–4; Trahoulia, "The Venice *Alexander Romance*," 21–2.
56. Michael Psellos, *Chronographie*, ed. and trans. Émile Renauld, 2 vols. (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1928), vol. 2, 51–2.
57. Anna Comnena, *The Alexaid of the Princess Anna Comnena*, trans. E. R. A. Sewter (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), 37, 52, 130, 277, 321, 414, and 495. It is interesting to note that Anna calls Alexios a "second Herakles" and accounts for his failures by noting that even Herakles was not capable of such feats. She further comments that Alexios surpassed Alexander in various ways. For Anna, Herakles seems the preferred imperial model.
58. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, 194; and Magdalino, "Isaac *Sebastokrator* (III), John Axouch, and a Case of Mistaken Identity," *BMGS* 11 (1987): 207–14, 210–12.
59. In contrast, during the pre-Iconoclast period, Greco-Roman figures were typically employed as imperial foils. See P. Monat, "La polémique de Lactante contre Hercule," in *Hommages à Lucien Lerat*, 2 vols. (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1984), vol. 2, 575–83.
60. Walter places the zenith of warrior-saint popularity in the reign of John I Tzimiskes and observes that it was not limited to Saint George; John I built a shrine to Saint Theodore Stratelates in recognition of the saint's aid

during battle. *The Warrior Saints*, 131–3 and 291–2.

61. Evgenidou, *Byzantium: An Oecumenical Empire*, 137, fig. 33.
62. *DOC*, vol. 4, pt. 1, 248, and pt. 2, pl. IX, E1.8a.1–8e.2. The story of George as a dragon slayer circulated beginning only in the twelfth century. Alexander Kazhdan and Nancy Ševčenko, "George," in *ODB*, vol. 2, 834–5; and K. J. Dorsch, "Der Drachentöter Georg – Korrektur eines Heiligenbildes," *Das Munster* 39 (1986): 297–300. The emperor Manuel I Komnenos placed Theodore on his coins; the saint is attired in military costume but is not mounted. *DOC*, vol. 4, pt. 1; pt. 2, pl. XII, 4a.3–4d and pl. XIII, 9.6–9.7.
63. For discussion of these encomia and their potentially ambivalent attitude toward Alexios, see Peter Frankopan, "Where Advice Meets Criticism in Eleventh Century Byzantium: Theophylact of Ohrid, John the Oxite and Their (Re)Presentations to the Emperor," *Al-Masāq* 20.1 (2008): 71–88, esp. 75–80.
64. K. Horna, "Die Epigramme des Theodoros Balsamon," *Wiener Studien* 25 (1903): 165–217; and Spyridon Lampros, "Ho Markianos Kōdix 524," *Neos Hellenomnemon* 8 (1911): 123–92, 131ff.; cited and discussed by Magdalino and Nelson, "The Emperor in Byzantine Art of the Twelfth Century," 154–60.
65. On this topic, see Kazhdan, "The Aristocracy and the Imperial Ideal," 43–57; Magdalino and Nelson, "The Emperor in Byzantine Art of the Twelfth Century," passim; and Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, 418–21 and 448–50.
66. In the fourth century, Eusebius employs Alexander as a negative exemplum for the Byzantine ruler, noting the king's early death as a result of indulgence and drunkenness. Constantine was pious, Alexander sinful; Constantine not only equaled Alexander's conquests, but also was ultimately peaceful, while Alexander was bellicose. Trahoulia, "The Venice *Alexander Romance*," 14; and Eusebius Pamphilus, *The Life of the Blessed Emperor Constantine* (London: S. Bagster, 1845), 7. The employment of Alexander as a foil to Christian emperors continued in Byzantine encomia during the reigns of the early Macedonian emperors, in particular Leo VI (r. 886–912). Trahoulia, "The Venice *Alexander Romance*," 18–21.
67. Michael Angold, "Introduction," in *The Byzantine aristocracy*, 8.
68. Darkevich, *Byzantine Secular Art*.
69. The trend in Alexander's popularity continued after the middle Byzantine period. Stephanos Sgouropoulos, a member of the Byzantine court-in-exile at Trebizond, wrote an encomium for either Alexios II Komnenos (r. 1297–1330) or Alexios III Komnenos (r. 1349–90), which demonstrates the continued use of Alexander as an imperial exemplar. Trahoulia, *The Greek Alexander Romance*, 32–4.
70. Walter, *The Warrior Saints*, 284. Regarding militaristic values during the Komnenian era, see Kazhdan, "The Aristocracy and the Imperial Ideal," 43–57.
71. Dorothy Shepherd, "Banquet and Hunt in Medieval Islamic Iconography," in *Gatherings in Honor of Dorothy E. Miner*, ed. Ursula E. McCracken et al., pp. 70–92 (Baltimore: Walters Art Gallery, 1974), 79–92; and Oya Pancaroğlu, "'A World unto Himself': The Rise of a New Human Image in the Late Seljuk Period (1150–1250)" (Ph.D. diss. Harvard University, 2000), 14–23.
72. Beckwith compared the Darmstadt lute player to an early tenth-century medallion of the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadir (r. 908–32), which depicts on the obverse a ruler seated on a dais, who raises a cup to drink, and on the reverse a second figure on a similar dais, who plays a lute. "The Influence of Islamic Art on Western Medieval Art," 270–2. But closer parallels are found in eleventh- and twelfth-century works of Islamic art.
73. The dais throne was inherited from Sasanian ruler iconography and was frequently employed in medieval Islamic art. See Prudence Harper, "Thrones and Enthronement Scenes in Sasanian Art," *Iran* 17 (1979): 49–72.
74. For further discussion of medieval Islamic princely cycle imagery and specifically the motif of the seated ruler, see Walker, "Cross-cultural Reception in the Absence of Texts," 99–122, 108–9, with additional bibliography.
75. Pseudo-Kallisthenes, *Alexander Romance*, 108–9.
76. Curiously, each figure holds a cloth in his left hand. Resembling the oracles in the scenes on the back long panel, these figures are perhaps intended to be read as the same (or at least the same type of) characters, who have here removed their head coverings.

77. An alternative interpretation would read the figures in this scene through a different textual source, an account of Alexander's interactions with the Brahmans composed by the fourth-century Bishop of Milan, Ambrose. *The Brahman Episode: St. Ambrose's Version of the Colloquy between Alexander the Great and the Brahmans of India*, trans. S. V. Yankowski (Ansbach: E. Kottmeier and E.G. Kostetzky, 1962), 16–23. According to this text, Alexander journeyed to India in order to consult the Brahman sage Calanus, but upon arriving he learned from the leader of the Brahmans, Dandamis, that Calanus became consumed with indulgences of the body and desires for material wealth and was therefore ostracized. Linking the image on the Darmstadt Casket with Ambrose's account, the foreign figure can be read as Calanus in a state of turpitude. The flanking figures would then portray members of the Brahman community, who are about to expel Calanus. To my knowledge, however, Calanus does not figure in imperial panegyrics or other middle Byzantine literary works as an antitype of the Byzantine emperor. For this reason, the identification of the cross-legged figure as Darius is preferred here.
78. John Scylitzes, *A Synopsis of Histories (811–1057 A.D.): A Provisional Translation*, trans. John Wortley (Winnipeg: The Centre for Hellenic Civilization at the University of Manitoba, 2000); cited by Trahoulia, "The Venice *Alexander Romance*," 43.
79. Michael Italikos, *Lettres et discours* [*de*] *Michel Italikos*, ed. Paul Gautier (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1972), 257, lines 12–14; cited by Trahoulia, "The Venice *Alexander Romance*," 35–6, with additional references to Italikos's use of Alexander as an imperial role model.
80. Nikephoros Basilakes, *Nicephori Basilacae orationes et epistolae*, ed. Antonio Garzya (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1984), 54, lines 10–18; cited and translated by Trahoulia, "The Venice *Alexander Romance*," 33–5. Also see Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, 432.
81. E. Miller, ed., *Recueil des historiens des croisades: historiens grecs*, 5 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1844–95), vol. 2, 744–5, 758, and 760–1; cited by Trahoulia, "The Venice *Alexander Romance*," 39. Also see Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, 447.
82. Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 135, cols. 1020–1; cited by Trahoulia, "The Venice *Alexander Romance*," 37.
83. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, 452 and 469.
84. Miller, *Recueil des historiens des croisades*, vol. 2, 744–5; cited by Maguire and Maguire, *Other Icons*, 144–5.
85. Magdalino and Nelson, "The Emperor in Byzantine Art of the Twelfth Century," 166–8; George T. Dennis, "Imperial Panegyric: Rhetoric and Reality," in *Byzantine Court Culture*, ed. Henry Maguire, pp. 131–40 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1994).
86. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 225–6; Magdalino and Nelson, "The Emperor in Byzantine Art of the Twelfth Century," 169; and Hunt, "Comnenian Aristocratic Palace Decoration," 139–40.
87. D. A. Russell and N. G. Wilson, *Menander Rhetor* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), xxxiv–xxxvi.
88. Russell and Wilson, *Menander Rhetor*, 84–5; cited by Trahoulia, "The Venice *Alexander Romance*," 13.
89. "*Preliminary Exercises* of Nicolaus the Sophist," as compiled by Apthonius and preserved in eleventh-century Byzantine manuscripts, Paris, Bibliothèque nationals, Gr. 1983 and 2977. *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, trans. George A. Kennedy (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 162.
90. Henry Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 109; and Maguire, "The Art of Comparing in Byzantium," *The Art Bulletin* 70 (1988): 88–103.
91. Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium*, 56.
92. Panagiotis Agapitos, "Ancient Models and Novel Mixtures: The Concept of Genre in Byzantine Funerary Literature from Photios to Eustathios of Thessalonike," in *Modern Greek Literature: Critical Essays*, ed. Gregory Nagy and Anna Stavrakopoulou, pp. 5–23 (New York: Routledge, 2003). Also see Helen Saradi, *Aspects of the Classical Tradition in Byzantium* (Toronto: n.p., 1995), 8 and 16; and Paolo Odorico, "La cultura della Συλλογή," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 83 (1990): 1–21.
93. Agapitos, "Ancient Models," 8.
94. On the subject of "inclusion," see Agapitos, "Ancient Models," 9; and Francis Cairns, *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1972), 158–76.

95. For architectural analysis of Digenes Akrites's palace and comparison with middle Byzantine aristocratic residences, see Hunt, "Comnenian Aristocratic Palace Decoration," 143–4.
96. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 216.
97. Frankopan, "Where Advice Meets Criticism," 75.
98. Lampros, " Ho Markianos Kōdix 524," 29–30; Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 225–6; and Hunt, "Comnenian Aristocratic Palace Decoration," 139–40.
99. *Suidae Lexicon*, ed. Ada Adler, 5 vols. (Stuttgart: B. G. Teubneri, 1967–71), vol. 2, 584.
100. McCann, *Roman Sarcophagi*, 48.
101. For discussion of Alexander's ascension as symbolic of both human achievement and limitation, see Galavaris, "Alexander the Great: Conqueror and Captive of Death," 17.
102. Choniates stops short of equating Andronikos's enslavement to women with that of Herakles; he states that the latter was completely emasculated because he carded wool, twisted the distaff, and worked the loom for Queen Omphale. Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, 139; and Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, 79 and 177.
103. Elpidio Mioni, ed., *Bibliothecae Divi Marci Venetiarum codices Graeci manuscripti*, 3 vols. (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1973), no. 4, lines 559–72 and 776–803; no. 14, lines 5–9; and no. 17, lines 15–22; trans. and discussed in Paul Magdalino, "Eros the King and the King of *Amours*: Some Observations on *Hysmine and Hysminias*," *DOP* 46 (1992): 197–204, 200–2; and Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, 453–4.
104. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, 423.
105. Psellos, *Chronographie*, 51–2; trans. Psellus, *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*, 241; cited by Trahoulia, "The Venice *Alexander Romance*," 27.
106. Psellus, *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*, 241–2; cited by Trahoulia, "The Venice *Alexander Romance*," 27.
107. Other orators express distinctly negative judgments on the Byzantine ruler and make recommendations regarding the paths he should forge and the models he should emulate. On this phenomenon in the late eleventh century during the reign of Alexios I Komnenos, see Frankopan, "Where Advice Meets Criticism." Regarding a critical attitude toward the emperor in twelfth-century histories, particularly that of Niketas Choniates, see Magdalino, "Aspects of Twelfth-Century Byzantine *Kaiserkritik*," 326–46. Also see discussion of John Kinnamos's account of Isaac and John Axouch's public critique of Manuel I in Magdalino, "Isaac Sebastokrator (III), John Axouch, and a Case of Mistaken Identity," 207–14. On this topic in general, see Franz H. Tinnefeld, *Kategorien der Kaiserkritik in der byzantinischen Historiographie von Prokop bis Niketas Choniates* (Munich: W. Fink, 1971).
108. Regarding "rhetorical theater," see Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, esp. 336–40.
109. Regarding twelfth-century orators' resentment of a perceived lack of imperial support, see Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, 417–29.
110. Oleg Grabar, "Islamic Art and Byzantium," *DOP* 18 (1964): 67–88; Grabar, "Patterns and Ways of Cultural Exchange," in *The Meeting of Two Worlds*, ed. V. P. Gross, pp. 441–6 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986); Grabar, "The Shared Culture of Objects"; Eva Hoffman, "A Fatimid Book Cover: Framing and Re-framing Cultural Identity in the Medieval Mediterranean World," in *L'Egypte Fatimide son art et son histoire*, ed. Marianne Barrucand, pp. 403–20 (Paris: Presse de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1999); Hoffman, "Pathways of Portability"; Cutler, "Les échanges de dons"; and Cutler, "The Parallel Universes of Arab and Byzantine Art."
111. Georgopoulou, "Sides of a Casket," 227–8.
112. Galavaris, *Zographike Vyzantinon Cheirographon*, 95, figs. 83 and 84.
113. Oliver Watson, *Ceramics from Islamic Lands* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 144–5, cat. Af.6. Nude figures associated with princely imagery and rendered in stucco were recovered from the remains of the Seljuq royal pavilion of Kılıç Arslan II, who visited the court at Constantinople in 1161. See Friedrich Sarre, *Der Kiosk von Konia* (Berlin: Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1936), pl. 16. But these motifs decorated a pleasure pavilion frequented by the court and do not appear to depict the ruler himself. A medieval Islamic drawing on paper depicts a naked and tattooed female figure who may represent an entertainer holding a lute in one hand, Richard Ettinghausen et al., *Islamic Art and Architecture 650–1250* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 211, fig.

341. But this image departs from the typical iconography of courtly lute players and is not expressly associated with the iconography of the cross-legged ruler.

In medieval Islamic art, nudity is typically reserved for the representation of less refined entertainers, such as wrestlers, whose activity required removal of their clothing, or the depiction of dishonored individuals, such as Zahhak, the enemy of the Persian hero Faridun, who is shown as a prisoner with his arms bound behind his back and his chest bare in the lower right side of a twelfth- to thirteenth-century Seljuq ceramic bowl. Marianne Shreve Simpson, "Narrative Allusion and Metaphor in the Decoration of Medieval Islamic Objects," in *Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. H. L. Kessler and M. S. Simpson, pp. 131–49 (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1985), 133 and 143, figs. 1 and 2.

114. Maguire, "The Profane Aesthetic in Byzantine Art and Literature," 189–205. Also see Cutler, "On Byzantine Boxes," 32–46. On the topic of humor in middle Byzantine culture, see Lynda Garland, "'And His Bald Head Shone Like a Full Moon...': An Appreciation of the Byzantine Sense of Humour as Recorded in Historical Sources of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," *Paregon* n.s. 8.1 (1990): 1–32.

115. Anthony Cutler, "Four Plaques from a 'Mythological' Casket," in *GOB*, 231–2, cat. no. 154 D.

116. Cutler, "On Byzantine Boxes," 41–2, figs. 15 and 16; and Kurt Weitzmann, *Ivories and Steatites*, vol. 3, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Medieval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1972), 49–55, no. 23, pl. XXIX, fig. C.

117. Maguire, "The Profane Aesthetic in Byzantine Art and Literature," 200–3; and Cutler, "On Byzantine Boxes," 32–47.

118. Regarding Byzantine terminology for Muslims and various Islamic ethnic groups, as well as changes in these terms over time, see Koray Durak, "Defining the 'Turk': Mechanisms of Establishing Contemporary Meaning in the Archaizing Language of the Byzantines," *JÖB* 59 (2009): 65–78.

119. Anna recounts the corruption of the Muslims as a justification for the Crusader advances. Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad of Anna Comnena*, 309–10.

120. Theophylactus of Ochrida, *Opera, discours, traités, poésies*, ed. Paul Gautier, vol. 16, pt. I, *Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae* (Thessalonike: Association de recherches byzantines, 1980), 179–243; cited by Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, 426.

121. Titos Pamastorakis notes that in the late thirteenth century, the orator Manuel Holobos recounted an earlier tradition of courtiers presenting the emperor with annual gifts that depicted his accomplishments for that year. Pamastorakis posits that many of the middle Byzantine works of art depicting images of the emperor, including the Troyes Casket (see Chapter 2; Fig. 17) and Bamberg Tapestry (see Fig. 20), could have been gifts from courtiers to their emperor. X. Sideridis, "Manouēl Holobou enkōmion eis ton autokratora Mixaēl hē ton Palaiologon," *Epetēris hetaireias byzantinōn spoudōn* 3 (1926): 174–91, esp. 174; and Pamastorakis, "The Bamberg Hanging Reconsidered," 384–6.

122. This is in keeping with the essentially xenophobic attitudes traced by Liliana Simeonova in middle Byzantine references to cultural others. "Constantinopolitan Attitudes toward Aliens and Minorities," 91–112.

CHAPTER FIVE. INCOMPARABILITY: THE AESTHETICS OF IMPERIAL AUTHORITY

1. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 160; Theophanes *continuatus chronographia*, 93–9.

2. Although *The Palace Revolt of John the Fat* was edited in 1907 and a German translation was published in 1958, the text as a whole has received little further critical attention. See Nikolaos Mesarites, *Die Palastrevolution des Johannes Komnenos*, ed. A. Heisenberg (Würzburg: H. Stürtz, 1907), par. 27–8; Mesarites, *Die Palastrevolution des Joannes Komnenos*, ed. and trans. Franz Grabler (Graz: Verlag Styria, 1958); and Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 228–9.

Other accounts of the palace revolution were recorded by Nikephoros Chrysoberges (d. ca. 1213), Niketas Choniates (d. 1217), and Euthymios Tornikios (d. ca. 1222). See Nicephorus Chrysoberges, *Ad Angelos orationes tres*, ed. M. Treu (Breslau: Druck von O. Gutsmann, 1892), 1–12; Nicetas Choniates, *Historia*, vol. 2, 9–11, 97, and 143–6; Choniates, *Orationes et epistulae*, ed. J. A. van Dieten (Berlin:

de Gruyter, 1972), 104; and J. Darrouzès, "Les discourse d'Euthyme Tornikès (1200–1205)," *Revue des études byzantines* 26 (1968): 56–72, 66–67. For discussion of these texts, see Brand, "The Turkish Element in Byzantium," 23–4.

3. In art-historical literature, the larger context of the passage, both textual and historical, is rarely discussed. Important exceptions include Paul Magdalino, "Manuel Komnenos and the Great Palace," *BMGS* 4 (1978): 101–15; Hunt, "Comnenian Aristocratic Palace Decoration," 141–2; and Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger, "'Muchrutas', Der selschukische Schaupavillon im Grossen Palast von Konstantinopel," *Byzantion* 74.2 (2004): 313–29.
4. Brand, "The Turkish Element in Byzantium," 9–10 and 23–24.
5. In this regard, I follow the recent trend in the study of ekphrasis to view such texts as "evidence for response to images…as a depiction of the process of viewing," noting, however, that such records are themselves self-conscious constructions of – not spontaneous responses to – the author's experience of a work of art. Ruth Webb, "Accomplishing the Picture: *Ekphrasis*, Mimesis, and Martyrdom in Asterios of Amaseia," in *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture*, ed. Liz James, pp. 13–32 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 14.
6. The presence of a "Persian" (Seljuq) artist in Constantinople would not have been surprising. Individuals of Turkish origin were active at the Byzantine court from the tenth to twelfth centuries, and populations of conquered Turks were settled in Byzantine lands. On the subject of Islamic artists working in Byzantine lands, see Anthony Cutler, "A Christian Ewer with Islamic Imagery and the Question of Arab *Gästarbeiter* in Byzantium," in *Iconographica: Mélanges offerts à Piotr Skubiszewski*, eds. Robert Favreau and Marie-Hélène Debiès, pp. 63–9 (Poitiers: Université de Poitiers, 1999); and Magdalino, "Manuel Komnenos and the Great Palace," 109.
7. The Seljuqs emerged during the 1040s in eastern Iran. Two separate, and at times rival, dynasties were actively engaged with the Byzantines: the dynasty known today as the Great Seljuqs (1040–1194) and the Seljuqs of Anatolia, also known as the Seljuqs of Rum (ca. 1080–1307). By the twelfth century, the Byzantines considered the Seljuqs of Rum to be of lower status to themselves, an attitude which differed from their treatment of the Great Seljuqs, whom they held to be of equal stature. Korobeinikov, "A Sultan in Constantinople," 95. As Koray Durak notes, Byzantine authors of the eleventh century and in some cases twelfth century (e.g., Anna Komnene [d. 1153/4]) distinguish between the Great Seljuqs and the Seljuqs of Asia Minor (including the Seljuqs of Rum) by referring to the Great Seljuqs as "Persians" and the Seljuqs of Asia Minor as "Turks." This distinction disappears in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries, after the decline and eventual disappearance of the Great Seljuqs. Byzantine historians writing in this period (e.g., John Kinnamos [d. after 1185], Niketas Choniates [d. 1217], and George Akropolites [d. 1282]) use the terms "Turk" and "Persian" interchangeably. See Durak, "Defining the 'Turk'" 65–78.
8. For a synthetic overview of literature on this topic, see Michael Angold, "The State of Research. The Road to 1204: The Byzantine Background to the Fourth Crusade," *Journal of Medieval History* 25.3 (1999): 257–78. Byzantine historians of the post-1204 period grappled with the events leading up to 1204 in an effort to account for the empire's demise. See Jonathan Harris, "Distortion, Divine Providence and Genre in Nicetas Choniates's Account of the Collapse of Byzantium 1180–1204," *Journal of Medieval History* 26.1 (2000): 19–31, esp. 31.
9. Korobeinikov, "A Sultan in Constantinople," 94–6.
10. On this point, see Hunt, "Comnenian Aristocratic Palace Decoration," 141–2.
11. Regarding imperial banquets and their role in the promotion of imperial authority and social hierarchy, see Simon Malmberg, "Visualizing Hierarchy at Imperial Banquets," in *Feast, Fast or Famine: Food and Drink in Byzantium*, ed. Wendy Mayer and Silke Trzcionka, pp. 11–24 (Brisbane: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 2005); Maguire and Maguire, *Other Icons*, 29–57; and Malmberg, "Dazzling Dining: Banquets as an Expression of Imperial Legitimacy," in *Eat, Drink, and Be Merry (Luke 12:19) – Food and Wine in Byzantium*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Kallirroe Linardou, pp. 75–91 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).
12. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 228n229.
13. Erich Trapp, *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität: Besonders des 9.-12. Jahrhunderts*, 5 vols. (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der

Wissenschaften, 1994–2005), vol. 5, 1050. I thank Rustam Shukurov for this reference.

14. Regarding medieval Islamic palaces and their historiography, see Necipoğlu, "An Outline of Shifting Paradigms in the Palatial Architecture of the Pre-modern Islamic World," 3–24, and additional essays in that volume.
15. It is unclear from Mesarites' text whether the tiles decorated the staircase or the chamber itself. They are described after the walls of the staircase and before the ceiling of the hall, indicating that they may have decorated the walls (possibly a dado) of the main chamber. Although painted ceramic tile decoration was used in Constantinople during the middle Byzantine period, its popularity seems to have been limited to the ninth to eleventh centuries. See Sharon E. J. Gerstel and Julie A. Lauffenburger, eds., *A Lost Art Rediscovered: The Architectural Ceramics of Byzantium* (Baltimore: Walters Art Museum, 2001), passim. None of the surviving Byzantine material resembles that described for the Mouchroutas Hall, supporting Mesarites' statement that the style of the building and the origin of the craftsman responsible for it were foreign.
16. Hunt, "Comnenian Aristocratic Palace Decoration," 142 and figs. 9 and 10, who misidentifies the kiosk as a thirteenth-century building; and Asutay-Effenberger, "'Muchrutas,'" 320–3. For the kiosk, see Sarre, *Der kiosk von Konia*; and Rüçhan Arik and Oluş Arik, "Konya Palace: Tiles of the KilicArslan II (Alaaddin) Kiosk," in *Tiles: Treasures of Anatolian Soil: Tiles of the Seljuk and Beylik Periods* (Istanbul: Kale Group, 2008), 225–38.
17. Asutay-Effenberger posits the date 1173–4 for the construction of the kiosk and further argues for its close connection to the Mouchroutas ("'Muchrutas,'" 320). While it is tempting to draw conclusions for the date of the Mouchroutas based on the speculation that it was modeled on the kiosk at Konya specifically, a direct correspondence between these structures is neither evident in the sources, nor necessary for an understanding of the Mouchroutas. It seems more prudent to conclude that the Mouchroutas emulates a Seljuq architectural *type* of the second half of the twelfth century – of which the kiosk is representative – rather than a specific building.
18. See Arik and Arik, *Tiles*, 225 and 228, figs. 163–4. Decorative tile work is also widely attested in thirteenth-century Seljuq structures, but these later buildings postdate the probable mid- to late twelfth-century foundation of the Mouchroutas. Regarding thirteenth-century Seljuq tile decoration, see Arik and Arik, "Tiles in Anatolian Seljuk Palace Architecture," in *Tiles*, 218–398, esp. 249–59 and 290–345.
19. *EI*, vol. 7, 72; and Watson, *Ceramics from Islamic Lands*, 362–71.
20. Arik and Arik, *Tiles*, 255, figs. 195 and 196; 300, fig. 269; and 327–8, fig. 330.
21. Ibid., 270, fig. 218; and 269–70, figs. 217–18.
22. For cross-shaped purple tiles that recall one of the colors cited by Mesarites, see ibid., 238, fig. 184.
23. Scott Redford, "Thirteenth-Century Rum Seljuq Palaces and Palace Imagery," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 219–38, esp. 223.
24. Arik and Arik, *Tiles*, 279–80, figs. 239 and 243.
25. Slobodan Ćurčić, "Some Palatine Aspects of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo," *DOP*, 41 (1987): 125–44, esp. 141–2. For additional possible models for the *muqarnas* ceiling of the Mouchroutas, see Hunt, "Comnenian Aristocratic Palace Decoration," 141–2, fig. 7.
26. Hunt, "Comnenian Aristocratic Palace Decoration," 142 and 151n36.
27. Ibid., 142, fig. 8. For an extensive compendium of images from the Cappella Palatina and a wide range of comparanda, see Ernst J. Grube and Jeremy Johns, *The Painted Ceilings of the Cappella Palatina* (Genova: Bruschettini Foundation for Islamic and Asian Art, 2005).
28. Jonathan Bloom, *Arts of the City Victorious: Islamic Art and Architecture in Fatimid North Africa and Egypt* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 171–2, fig. 142.
29. Hunt, "Comnenian Aristocratic Palace Decoration," 142.
30. The term "visuality" recognizes that the act of viewing and cognition of the visual is neither innocent nor natural but acculturated and even open to manipulation. For discussion of Byzantine visuality, see James Trilling, "The Image Not Made by Human Hands and the Byzantine Way of Seeing," in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*, ed. Herbert Kessler and Gerhard Wolf, pp. 109–27 (Bologna: Nuova Alfa, 1998). Regarding the distinct visualities of premodern and non-Western cultures, see Robert S. Nelson, ed., *Visuality before and beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
31. As Ruth Macrides and Paul Magdalino note, early Byzantine ekphrasis was often delivered

in close proximity to the monuments or works of art that it describes and to audiences familiar with the buildings and objects. "The Architecture of Ekphrasis: Construction and Context of Paul the Silentiary's Poem on Hagia Sophia," *BMGS* 12 (1988): 47–82, 50; also see James and Webb, "'To Understand Ultimate Things and Enter Secret Places': Ekphrasis and Art in Byzantium," *Art History* 14.1 (1991): 1–17, esp. 12. Henry Maguire perceives a similar phenomenon in middle Byzantine ekphrasis, including Mesarites' own description of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. He argues that Mesarites' audience would have likely been familiar not only with the building he described but also with many of the rhetorical devices he employed. "Truth and Convention in Byzantine Descriptions of Works of Arts," *DOP* 28 (1974): 113–40 at 139.

32. James and Webb, "'To Understand Ultimate Things,'" 5; and Ruth Webb, "*Ekphrasis* Ancient and Modern: The Invention of a Genre," *Word and Image* 15.1 (1999): 7–18, esp. 15–18. On the relationship between Byzantine rhetoric and art, see the seminal work by Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium*. Regarding the role of ekphrasis in antique literature, see Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination, and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).
33. Regarding John Axouch's relationship with John II and Manuel I, see Magdalino, "Isaac *Sebastokrator* (III), John Axouch, and a Case of Mistaken Identity," 207–14.
34. Alexios Komnenos was made co-emperor in 1122, but died before his father and therefore never assumed independent rule. On the careers of John and Alexios Axouch, see Brand, "The Turkish Element in Byzantium," 4–6, 8–9, 15–16, 18, and 23.
35. Alexios Axouch was censured for decorating the walls of his palace with scenes of the Seljuq sultan's campaigns. Hunt suggests that this program may in fact have been an Islamic "princely cycle," misinterpreted or intentionally misconstrued to represent the enemy's victories. "Comnenian Aristocratic Palace Decoration," 140 and 142; also see Brand, "The Turkish Element in Byzantium," 10.
36. Criticizing the forefathers of John the Fat, the historian and imperial secretary John Kinnamos (d. ca. 1185) raises the issue of their questionable loyalty, an accusation that seems to stem from their Seljuq origins and therefore suggests distortion bred as much from prejudice as from fact. John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, 14, 47, 82–3, and 199–202.
37. "Manuel Komnenos and the Great Palace," 106.
38. Maguire, "Style and Ideology in Byzantine Imperial Art," 217.
39. Ibid., 225.
40. Michael Psellus, *Scripta minora*, ed. Eduard Kurtz, 2 vols. (Milan: Società editrice "Vita e pensiero," 1936–41), vol. 1, 46–7, ll. 35–58, at l. 36; cited by Maguire, "Style and Ideology in Byzantine Imperial Art," 224.
41. Regarding disorderliness as an indication of unfitness for the imperial throne, see Maguire, "Images of the Court," 185–88.
42. An additional factor may have motivated Mesarites' selection of this particular ancient monument. In response to words of praise for his palace, Menelaus says that he would readily sacrifice his abode and possessions in order to revive all the comrades lost in the battles that brought him his riches. In this way, the beauty of Menelaus's palace carries a moralizing message regarding human vanity and the high price of material wealth. A similarly critical perspective may have been cast on the Mouchroutas and John the Fat.
43. Regarding the Byzantine habit of grouping ancient pagan and contemporary Islamic artistic forms in a common category, see Walker, "Meaningful Mingling," 32–53; and Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, 122.
44. Ruth Webb, "The Aesthetics of Sacred Space: Narrative Metaphor, and Motion in *Ekphraseis* of Church Buildings," *DOP* 53 (1999): 59–74 at 73. Regarding Byzantine aesthetic categories for the perceptible realm, in particular Byzantine values for color and light, see James, *Light and Colour in Byzantine Art*. For discussion of the synesthetic nature of Byzantine veneration and the icon's role in stimulating such experiences, see Bissera V. Pentcheva, "The Performative Icon," *The Art Bulletin* 88.4 (2006): 631–55.
45. Basil of Caesarea (ca. 329–79) summarizes this theory as follows: "the honor shown to the image is transmitted to its model," that is to say, when a Christian venerated an icon, she venerated not the wood and paint of the image, but the actual holy person the image represented. *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*: *Series Graeca*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, 161 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1857–91), vol. 32, col. 149, par. 45 (ch. 18); trans.

in Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 47. The same point was later reiterated by John of Damascus (ca. 675–753): "As the God-inspired Basil, who was learned in things divine, says, 'The honor [shown] to the image is conveyed to its prototype.'" *Patrologiae Graeca*, vol. 94, col. 1169, par. 93 (bk. 4, ch. 16); trans. in Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 169. Anxiety regarding the materiality of icons lingered such that the role of the icon as an aid to, rather than end point of, spiritual truth was self-consciously maintained in post-Iconoclast Byzantine icon theory. See James and Webb, "'To Understand Ultimate Things,'" 12; Leslie Brubaker, "Byzantine Art in the Ninth Century: Theory, Practice and Culture," *BMGS* 13 (1989): 23–83; and Brubaker, "Perception and Conception: Art, Theory, and Culture in Ninth-Century Byzantium," *Word and Image* 5.1 (1989): 19–32. Regarding the dynamics of Byzantine icon theory and the parameters of post-Iconoclast visuality, see Maguire, *The Icons of Their Bodies*, esp. 138–9 and 144–5; Robin Cormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and Its Icons* (London: George Philip, 1985), esp. 141–78; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*; and Charles Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

46. For discussion of the mirroring and interpenetration of heavenly and earthly courts in Byzantine imperial ideology and art, see Maguire, "The Heavenly Court"; and Tirnanić, "Divine Images and Earthly Authority," 75–101. For a brief synopsis of Byzantine theories of imperial authority, see Ostrogorsky, "The Byzantine Emperor and the Hierarchical World Order," 1–14.

47. Glanville Downey, "Nikolaos Mesarites: Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* n.s. 47.6 (1957): 857–924. On the date of the building's construction and decoration, see A. Epstein, "The Rebuilding and Redecoration of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 23 (1982): 79–92.

48. James and Webb, "'To Understand Ultimate Things,'" 11. Also see Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination, and Persuasion*, 195.

49. Downey, "Nikolaos Mesarites," 867 and 900, ch. 12, 1.

50. For additional Byzantine authors who cite the necessity to move beyond the physicality of an image to the spiritual truth it conveyed, see James and Webb, "'To Understand Ultimate Things,'" 11.

51. On this distinction, see n45, above.

52. In his discussion of the Church of the Holy Apostles, Mesarites refers to the image of Christ as a means to access God. He describes the Christ Pantokrator in the dome over the central space of building (from which extended four lateral halls), as follows:

> [T]he other [hall] in the center stands up above them [the four lateral halls], and the direction of this one faces toward heaven, calling on the heavenly God-Man, I believe, to descend to it and through it as though from heaven, and, in His portrayed form, to gaze down upon all of the sons of men, who by His command dwell upon the earth, but possess their commonwealth in heaven. And like a square-cut stone or a geometric outline, it [the central hall] binds the other four to itself and binds them to each other as well, and stands there as a kind of mediator and a reconciler of those which formerly were separated from each other, in this I believe, imitating the mediator between God and Man, who is portrayed in the midst of it [in the dome of the central hall], Christ, truly the square cut stone, who bound together those things which formerly were far divided, and who through Himself drew us, who were formerly His foes, to His own Father and our God.

Downey, "Nikolaos Mesarites," 869 and 901, ch. 13, 5–6; also see James and Webb, "'To Understand Ultimate Things,'" 17n80.

53. Webb notes that in ekphrasis on churches, Byzantine authors carefully enjoin the viewer not to dwell on the physical beauty of these structures, but to "lift their perception from the material to the spiritual." Webb, "The Aesthetics of Sacred Space," 69. Mesarites' emphasis on the physical properties of the Mouchroutas might, therefore, be read as a statement regarding its lack of spiritual significance.

54. In this respect, the relationship between the "Persian" images and John the Fat has something in common with Byzantine theories of the mechanics of pagan idols, which are considered either embodiments of corrupt and malevolent otherworldly forces or mere material objects that lacked spiritual prototypes. On

this point, see Eastmond, "Between Icon and Idol," 76–7.

55. Regarding the Byzantine notion that political truth could be realized through physical images, see Kalavrezou et al., "Critique of the Emperor," 195–219. On the topic of Byzantine *Kaiserkritik*, see Tinnefeld, *Kategorien der Kaiserkritik*; and Magdalino, "Aspects of Twelfth-Century Byzantine *Kaiserkritik*," 326–46.

56. In Byzantine imperial panegyrics, buildings were used as a means to acclaim the achievements of an emperor as founder or renovator. Macrides and Magdalino, "The Architecture of Ekphrasis," 50; and Elsner, "The Rhetoric of Buildings," 33–57. But in the case of Mesarites, this topos is inverted: John is not himself a patron of the hall, but only the passive recipient of his predecessor's accomplishments. Furthermore, these predecessors and their building are, like John, foreign, and as such intrinsically inferior, even morally and physically corrupt.

57. The Chrysotriklinos was likely built in the sixth century and renovated in subsequent eras. As Mango notes, the *Book of Ceremonies* does not provide a concise and specific description of the Chrysotriklinos, but instead mentions different features at various points throughout the text. *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, xii. Also see Dagron, "Trônes pour un empereur," 179–203; Jeffrey Featherstone, "The Chrysotriklinos Seen through *De Cerimoniis*," 845–52; and Featherstone, "The Great Palace as Reflected in *De Cerimoniis*," esp. 50–8.

58. Jean Ebersolt, *Le grand palais de Constantinople et le livre des cérémonies* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1910), 149–50. More recent scholarship critiques Ebersolt for producing plans of the palace that elaborate too far beyond that which can be supported by the available textual and archaeological evidence. For schematic plans that reflect more accurately the known documentation (but omit the Mouchroutas Hall), see Jonathan Bardill, "Visualizing the Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors at Constantinople: Archaeology, Text, and Topography," in *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft: Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen: Gestalt und Zeremoniell*, ed. Franz Alto Bauer, pp. 5–45 (Istanbul: Ege Yayinlari, 2006).

Regarding the identification and location of the Mouchroutas, see Magdalino, "Manuel Komnenos and the Great Palace," 101–8. Based on structures depicted in early modern views of Constantinople, which she interprets as parallels to Mesarites' description of the Mouchroutas, Asutay-Effenberger positions the monument between the western end of the Hippodrome and the Marmara Sea wall. "'Muchrutas,'" 323–28. She declines to address, however, the location of the Chrysotriklinos (ibid., 315), a question that is essential to any argument for the placement of the Mouchroutas because Mesarites states that the two structures are in close proximity to each other.

59. Regarding the potential of monumental inscriptions to assist in accessing the viewing experience of Byzantine audiences, see Amy Papalexandrou, "Echoes of Orality in the Monumental Inscriptions of Byzantium," in *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture*, ed. Liz James, pp. 161–87 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

60. Pièrre Waltz, ed. and trans., *Anthologie grecque*, 12 vols. (Paris: Société d'édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1960), vol. 1, 106; trans. in Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 184 and 184n9. The "imposters" mentioned in the inscription are the Iconoclast emperors, who removed images of Christ and other holy figures from the churches and palaces of Constantinople. Mango suggests that the decoration and the inscription at the Chrysotriklinos were executed between 856 and 866 because no mention is made of the empress Theodora (r. 842–56; expelled from the palace in 856) or the emperor Basil I (who was crowned co-emperor in 866 and ruled independently from 867 to 886). *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 184. In addition, "Michael whose deeds are filled with wisdom" likely refers to Emperor Michael III (r. 842–67), under whose rule Iconoclasm was ended in 843.

61. Maguire, "The Heavenly Court," 257.

62. The divine origin of imperial authority is also attested in the acclamations that were publicly recited during imperial ceremonies. For example, the *Book of Ceremonies* records that on the feast of Epiphany, the emperor was greeted with the words "He [Christ] who today was baptized through the hand of the Prodromos [John the Baptist], proclaims you today emperor with his awesome hand, God-crowned benefactors, and points you out as worthy throughout the universe." Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos,

Le livre des cérémonies, vol. 1, 36–7, ll. 23–7; cited and discussed in Kalavrezou, "Helping Hands for the Empire," 73.

63. Downey, "Nikolaos Mesarites," 867 and 900, ch. 12, 1.
64. W. J. T. Mitchell, "Ekphrasis and the Other," in *Picture Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 151–82.
65. Hunt, "Comnenian Aristocratic Palace Decoration," 142.
66. As Ruth Webb summarizes, "The impact [of ekphrasis] derived from the judicious choice of details that corresponded to the audience's prior knowledge and expectations, calling up the mental images already stocked in the storehouse of memory." "*Ekphrasis* Ancient and Modern," 13–14. Webb introduces the concept of *enargeia*, or vividness, to explain the process of mutual imagination of author and audience as well as the author's anticipation and manipulation of imagery in the audience's visual storehouse. For full discussion of *enargeia* and its relation to *phantasia* (the audience's imaging of references made by the author/orator), see Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination, and Persuasion*, 87–130.
67. In terms of the beholder's completion of the work of art, scholars suggest that the characteristic abstraction of Byzantine art may indicate an expectation that the viewer would complete the image, that mimesis was found not in the work of art but in the viewer's mind. Within this "transfer of aesthetic responsibility," rhetoric, especially ekphrasis, played an important role as a means of guiding the viewer in the completion of the work of art. See John Onians, "Abstraction and Imagination in Late Antiquity," *Art History* 3 (1980): 1–23; and Trilling, "The Image Not Made by Human Hands," 121–3, with additional references, 121n31.
68. Webb expertly articulates these points in relation to Mesarites' account of the Church of the Holy Apostles. See "The Aesthetics of Sacred Space," 73–4.
69. Christian Walz, ed., *Rhetores Graeci*, 9 vols. (Stuttgart: J. G. Cottae, 1832–36), vol. 7, 951, lines 13–16. Regarding the emergence of obscurity as a virtue in Byzantine rhetoric of the tenth and eleventh centuries, see George L. Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric* (Thessalonike: Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies, 1973), 89–96. On the value of obscurity in the eyes of middle Byzantine rhetoricians and audiences, see Andrew F. Stone, "On Hermogenes's Features of Style and Other Factors Affecting Style in the Panegyrics of Eustathios of Thessaloniki," *Rhetorica* 19.3 (2001): 307–39, esp. 334–5.
70. In his account of the Church of the Holy Apostles, Mesarites describes the various levels of students who attend the school attached to the church, the most advanced of whom "have achieved the higher and more complete stages, weave webs of phrases and transform the written sense into riddles, saying one thing with their tongues, but hiding something else in their minds" (ch. 8, 3, 868). Yet he seems to cast a negative judgment on this type of rhetorical dissembling. He asks in a subsequent passage for Saint Thomas to drive off "those who say one thing with their tongues and hide something else in their minds, who are white and black at once, seeming white so far as the outward man is affected, and showing the white and pure character of friendship, and, so to speak, clad with it outwardly, but black within, in their hearts which sit in ambush, full of envy and abuse and anger and darkness." Downey, "Nikolaos Mesarites," ch. 12, 13, 900. We might assume, therefore, that Mesarites' own obscurity and hidden messages were pure in intention.
71. Downey, "Nikolaos Mesarites," 868 and 901, ch. 12, 18.
72. Such expectations were not limited to Mesarites. Macrides and Magdalino argue that Paul the Silentiary's sixth-century ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia was recited for a select group of Byzantine elites and that the effectiveness of the speech relied on the audience's previous exposure to both the building and the mosaic that he described, as well as to a Syriac hymn sung at Hagia Sophia. "The Architecture of Ekphrasis," 76–9.
73. As James and Webb posit, "Ekphrasis thus made present not the actual picture, which could be seen, but the spiritual reality behind it." "'To Understand Ultimate Things,'" 12.

CONCLUSION

1. On the multicultural environment of Norman Sicily and Roger II's management and promotion of this social environment, see William Tronzo, *The Cultures of His Kingdom: Roger II and the Cappella Palatina in Palermo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Jeremy Johns, *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily: The Royal Dīwān* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and David Knipp, "Images,

Presence, and Ambivalence: The Byzantine Tradition of the Painted Ceiling in the Cappella Palatina, Palermo," in *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft: Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen: Gestalt und Zeremoniell*, ed. Franz Alto Bauer, pp. 283–328 (Istanbul: Ege Yayinlari, 2006).

2. Antony Eastmond, *Art and Identity in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium: Hagia Sophia and the Empire of Trebizond* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), xx.
3. Ibid., xx.
4. Ibid., 154–5.
5. Regarding the Trapezuntine attribution and a date for the manuscript to the second half of the fourteenth century, as well as its association with Alexios III, see Trahoulia, *The Greek Alexander Romance*, 31–3.
6. Ibid., 51 and 107.
7. Ibid., 39.
8. Ibid., 31 and 47.
9. Ibid., 32–3.

APPENDIX

1. My translation adapts and expands that of Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 228–9.
2. For the argument supporting my reading of chevron (zigzag) motifs in the staircase, see discussion in Chapter 5.
3. Mesarites, *Die Palastrevolution des Johannes Komnenos*, 44–6.

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